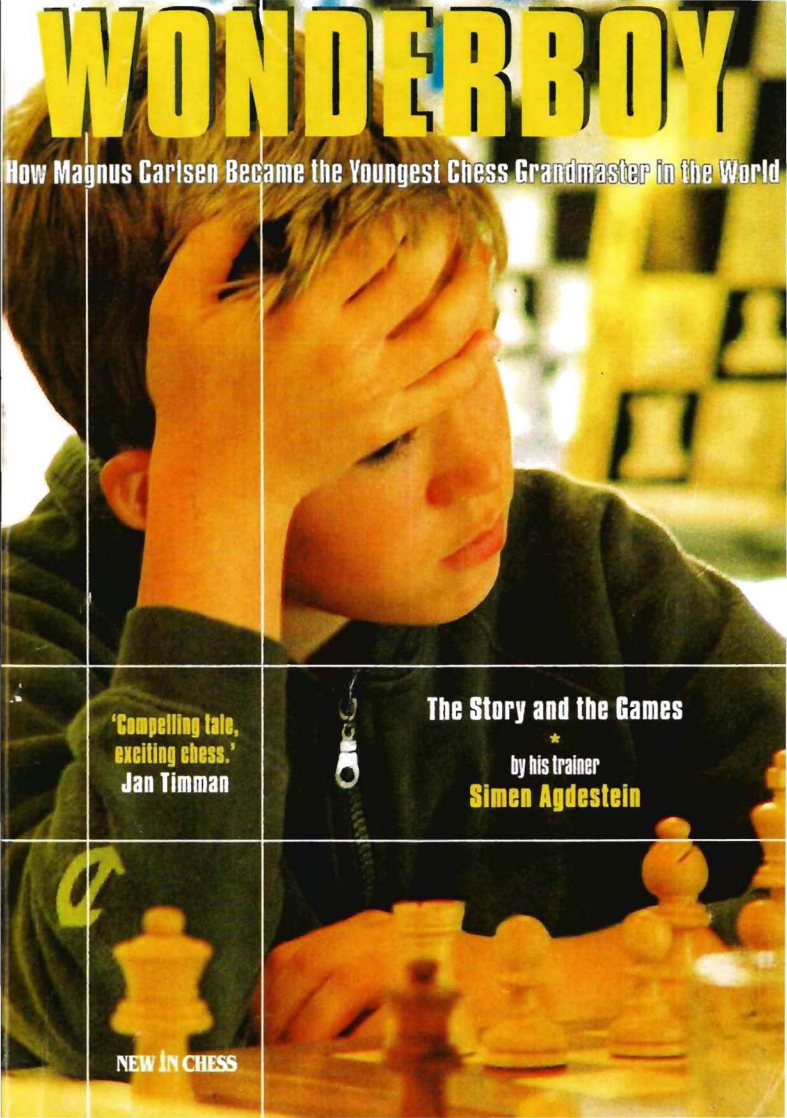
WONDERBOY

How Magnus Carlsen Became the Youngest Chess Grandmaster in the World



'Compelling tale, exciting chess.'
Jan Timman

The Story and the Games

*

by his trainer
Simen Agdestein

NEW IN CHESS

VISIT…

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and the Games

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2004 New In Chess

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Preface

'What? He's just 13 years old! Isn't it a bit early for a biography?' This was the spontaneous reaction from grandmaster colleague Jonathan Tisdall when I called and asked if he would translate a book about Magnus Carlsen into English.

Yes, obviously it is very early. But this is not an ordinary 13-year-old we're talking about. On 26 April, 2004, just 13 years, 4 months and 26 days old, Magnus became the world's youngest chess grandmaster (GM). 'It's like a 13-year-old winning the Nobel Prize in chemistry,' I said, trying to explain to a massive press corps how big this really was. Because there is no doubt that the wider world has noticed this young boy from Lommedalen in Bærum, a suburb just outside Oslo.

The big media breakthrough came a few weeks earlier, when he defeated former world champion Anatoly Karpov in a blitz game in Reykjavik. The next day the telephone never stopped ringing. Magnus was in Iceland, blissfully unaware of the kind of uproar he had set in motion. I felt like I had spoken with every member of the media that day, and at any rate I dealt with them from six in the morning until late in the evening. 'Everyone' wanted to hear about the prodigy.

After the completion of the grandmaster title it started up again. Magnus was in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, celebrating with an ice cream at McDonald's while the press screamed for Magnus stories. And not just the press. With friends I have at least one topic of conversation that always works and total strangers can still come up and say: 'Hey, what that little boy is doing is great!', 'Does he beat you?', or 'How good can he be?'

Hopefully I can give a bit more thorough answer in this book. I have watched and trained Magnus for the past four years, since he was nine, and all the way I have had to pinch myself in the arm and shake my head in disbelief. 'Is it really possible?' 'He is just 10 years old!' 'Participating in the Norwegian championship's top class as an 11-year-old!' 'The youngest Nordic international master (IM), just 12 years old!' Now, when he has gone and become the world's youngest chess grandmaster at 13, it just seems a natural step in his meteoric development.

Magnus' story is like a fairy tale. But at the same time it hasn't come as a total surprise. Indeed, I told his father one of the first times I saw Magnus in the winter of 2000 that the boy could become a GM before he was 14. It was obvious that he was an enormous talent.

The book is arranged chronologically. We follow Magnus and his fantastic journey from when he began to play with chess pieces at the age of five, until the present day. Many fine games are included in the book. I have tried to annotate these so that they can be easily understood, in the hope of making them accessible even for those who have only a limited knowledge of chess. The games illuminate the story but

the book can also be read independent of them. It is an advantage to know something about chess to understand the context. For those not so familiar with the chess world, a small chess glossary in the back of the book explains the most common terms.

Magnus Carlsen is the result of a fine environment and a mindful family. Precisely because of this, I am not afraid to write a book about Magnus – even if he is still in many ways just a little boy.

My old football trainer at Oslo club Lyn, Erling Hokstad, used to say that it is how you perform in your next game that counts, not what you have done before. The same applies here. Magnus is far too young to start resting on his laurels. He is constantly focusing his gaze forward.

Magnus still plays chess because it is fun. He has been allowed to frolic and do what he likes best of all, namely, play chess. But if this pleasure should turn in another direction, that will be fine. There are many who have enjoyed Magnus' chess performances and some have already begun to talk about a future world champion, but this will not put any pressure on Magnus. He must have fun as he continues to play, in the direction and at the speed that he chooses for himself.

This book records the history of phenomenon Magnus Carlsen and aims to describe a marvelous tale, the way those of us around Magnus experienced it.

My thanks to New In Chess for publishing the book. I have also had valuable comments on the text from my niece, Maren Agdestein and from my wife, Marianne Aasen Agdestein.

Eirik Gullaksen also deserves profound tribute for his awesome web site (http://home.online.no/~eirikgu/bs.htm), where everything that has happened in Norwegian chess in recent years is catalogued. This has made research a rewarding job.

Even greater thanks to Henrik Carlsen, Magnus' father. Without his stories it would have been impossible to write this book. And thanks of course to Magnus, who has pleased so many with his fantastic progress.

The book has come to pass in the course of three hectic summer months, between other duties – thanks also to my family, who have been very patient with me.

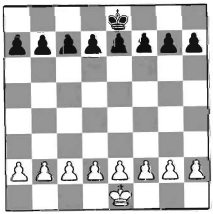
Simen Agdestein
Asker, Norway
August 2004

1 A clever boy

Childhood years to New Year 2000

'Why do people ride horses?'
– question by Magnus before a five-year pause from getting up on horseback.

Magnus learned chess relatively late to become a 13-year-old grandmaster. He learned how to move the pieces at five, which is just about early enough. His father Henrik, who is an able club player, tried to pass on his beloved hobby to his children, and began by spotting them all of his pieces, as in this diagram:

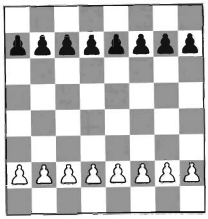


Magnus played White but, alas, things went so slowly! Magnus did not appear to understand much so his father dropped the project. There were not going to be any Polgar feats here. A comparison with the Hungarian Polgar family is relevant. They also succeeded in producing a child prodigy (or rather three!), but their method was quite different. Already at the age of four, Zsuzsa, the eldest of three sisters, was given the choice if she wanted to be a mathematician or a chess player. She chose, understandably enough, to be a chess player – much more fun! – and after that there was full focus on chess and private trainers all the way. Even school was dropped, with the children gaining permission to study at home and take exams on their own.

Father Polgar regarded this as a social experiment. He wanted to see if one could train forth a genius. And, in fact, he succeeded. Zsuzsa became a grandmaster and eventually women's world champion while middle sister Sofia became an international master. But the youngest of the trio, Judit, would really become a superstar. She was about as good as Magnus is now at a comparable age but as she had fewer tournaments to play in she needed a bit of time to become a grandmaster. When she was 15 years, four months and 28 days old she achieved this esteemed title, the chess world's highest. This still gave her plenty of time to become one of the absolute world elite. Today she is one of the biggest chess stars around and on January 1 of this year she occupied the eighth spot in the world rankings.

The Polgar family also started with a simplified form of chess. But instead of one side playing without pieces, the gifted chess teachers took away all pieces from

both sides, kings included, leaving only the pawns behind:



White moves first and the first player to get a pawn across to the eighth rank wins. It's quite an amusing game, give it a try!

While the Polgar girls concentrated hard on chess from the age of four, things went a bit more slowly for Magnus. Father Carlsen did not see any particular chess talent in his son and didn't try to push him. Henrik tried again a bit when Magnus was 6-7 years old, but strangely enough the seeds of the boy's chess talent remained well hidden.

But a brain can be used in other ways. The Carlsen family had always been conscientious about giving their children intellectual challenges, and it quickly became clear that Magnus had extreme qualities on the analytic front. Before the age of two Magnus could solve jigsaw puzzles with over 50 pieces, and when he was four he could sit all day and build advanced Lego models with lengthy instructions intended for the 10-14 year-old group.

After such 'Lego days' where Magnus was totally absorbed building for hours, he could lie awake at night, wide-eyed and unable to sleep because he kept thinking about Lego. This feeling is well known to chess players, but then all thoughts flit around the 64 squares in black and white.

Magnus also developed his analytical powers early with math problems. This interest first appeared when he started first grade. One doesn't encounter very advanced problems at that age but Magnus was soon consumed with increasingly complex calculations. He could solve problems in his head faster then than when he left primary school seven years later – something had been lost along the way.

A good memory is another important aptitude for those who want to become good at chess – at least it is a very useful ability. Magnus' memory is formidable. In my attempts to explain to journalists and others how impressive Magnus' performances at the chessboard are, I used to point out that at the age of five he knew the area and population of all of Norway's 430 municipalities. 'Then you hook up this brain to chess, add eight years of development and you can imagine what we are talking about.'

It turns out that I have not been completely accurate. What Magnus knew by heart at the age of five was the area, population, flag and capital of all the countries in the world. After this he began a similar project with all of Norway's municipalities, a task of roughly twice the size. Here he could make occasional errors, but he learned 'practically everything', including the coats of arms on municipal shields as well as areas, populations and capitals.

In our chess sessions many years later I have had the pleasure of witnessing several

episodes of similar character. After Magnus finished second at the U-12 World Championship (for junior players under 12 years of age) in 2002 we had a visit from a TV reporter from Norwegian Broadcasting. I praised Magnus' memory and pulled out one of the approximately 500 chess books on my shelves and said that Magnus surely remembered all of these games. My choice fell upon a collection of Vladimir Kramnik's best games that I knew Magnus had at home. I pointed out the diagram below, covered the rest of the page, and asked who played black and white here:

With an alert camera man filming everything, Magnus replied immediately and correctly: 'Kramnik-Ehlvest'. And then: 'By the way, it was played in Vienna 1996,'. That was right as well.

This ability to remember games and positions is obviously extremely useful in a sport like chess. In my computer's database I have 2,607,014 games – and that is without updating it with the last 50,000 games that have been played in major events in the last six months. The first games in the base, which stem from the 1500s, are perhaps not so interesting. But, on the other hand, what has happened in the last 150 years develops like Darwinist evolution, where emerging players constantly learn from their forebears.

One can read books on chess theory where one, in a way, reads the result of this long development. But if one is truly to delve into and understand chess one must both go back through history and study the games of the old masters and follow modern grandmaster play, where chess theory is developing at a furious pace. What was assessed as good for White last year can perhaps be good for Black now, thanks to a surprising new idea from a well-known player. So you just can't memorise chess – the material is far too fluid. Chess must be understood. But understanding must be founded on something, and there memory comes in as an important tool.

The enormous flow of computer information has also posed challenges. With a few simple keystrokes one can categorise all of the games in a database in different ways. It only takes a few seconds to cough up all the games of any possible opponent. For example, it took me eight seconds to find all of the roughly 300 games Magnus has managed to play so far in international tournaments. Games from lesser events don't appear but all grandmaster games and everything significant is constantly being added on top of an already extensive archive of material.

So when Magnus prepares before a game it takes little time to check the opponent's games and find out which openings he or she plays and then find something to do against just that. But it also demands an ability to absorb large amounts of information. After a while there is so much to digest that it can quickly become chaos.

Magnus also has a fantastic ability to read chess books. By the age of nine he could sit for hours with advanced chess books in English and play through the games in his head, without a board and pieces. Real chess players read chess books the way others read gossip magazines and this was something Magnus picked up early.

Just before Magnus made his first grandmaster norm in Wijk aan Zee in the Netherlands in January 2004 there was another impressive episode where we got a little glimpse of what is in this little boy's brain. We sat with all of the chess students at NTG (Norwegian College for Top Athletes) and analysed a pupil's game. After an unusual variation in the Petroff Defence and the moves: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘xe5 0-0 5.♗e2 ♖e8 6.♘d3 ♗xc3 7.dxc3 ♘xe4 8.0-0 d5 9.♘f4 c6 10.c4 d4, we had the following position on the board.

I didn't know this and thought the position looked a bit strange. For Magnus, on the other hand, this position stirred something deep in his sub-conscious, because he suddenly said: 'This is Adams-Hübner!', in other words, a game played between these two grandmasters.

Those assembled were rather impressed. For fun, I asked if he also remembered where and when the game was played. 'Dortmund 1997' was the immediate reply. The database was called up to quickly check if this was right. It was, except that the game was played in 1996, not 1997 – news that was met with ironic boos and sarcastic cries of disappointment and derision from the others. And this was in a position from an extremely unusual opening that Magnus had never played with white or black.

The day before Magnus had given a blindfold simultaneous against five of the students, who are among the best junior players in Norway. None of the players had a board or pieces but to make it a little easier for the students I let them write down the moves. Magnus just went around without any type of aid, only seeing the games in his head, and won easily, 4½-½. He won four games and one was a draw. The games were both long and complex but Magnus had no problems keeping track of everything in his head and in addition outplaying the country's junior elite.

Grandmaster Rune Djurhuus holds the Norwegian record for blindfold simultaneous chess with 14 games, which is also very impressive. I tried to do what Magnus did against the same five students but had to admit that I had no chance at all to succeed. After just a few moves everything turned to soup and I could no longer manage to remember anything.

If you are really going to become a top chess player however, it is not just enough with a well-trained head – one also has to be physically fit. A game of tournament chess can often last four to five hours and

is like an exacting exam. And a tournament is most often nine games long. In recent years Magnus has played 100-150 tournament games a year and this is unquestionably physically demanding.

Between all the playing and studying Magnus is an active young boy – like any average 13-year-old. Many a time he has not had time to study chess with me because he had to go skiing or play in a football match. Football has a special pull for Magnus. He plays like a little terrier and clearly revels in being able to motor around. He has even competed in ski jumping, but chose to retire at the age of ten. His personal record is 21 meters.

The Carlsens often hike in the mountains and Magnus loves to scale peaks, but he is even more occupied with intellectual pursuits. Once, when Magnus was five, father Henrik took the children – Magnus and sisters Ellen and Ingrid – on a two-day trip northwestwards in Jotunheimen from their cabin at Tyinkrysset. They drove to Juvasshytta and hoped to be part of a group climb up to Galdhøpiggen, at 2,469 metres Norway's highest mountain. But Magnus was too small and they were not allowed to join. Magnus nevertheless wanted to reach the top. So, they set off on another, longer path and still managed to scale the country's highest mountain peak.

Afterwards his father jokingly asked what had been the high point of the trip – scaling Galdhøpiggen, slalom skiing at Juvasshytta or seeing the municipal shield of little Luster, which Magnus recognised from his fact book. Magnus took the question seriously and after long thought replied, 'That would have been the municipal shield!'

Magnus is also a fervent sports enthusiast. At the age of six or seven he started to read the thick sports volumes that record all of the year's top performances. He read them in the same way he read about countries and municipalities, not trying to learn it all by heart, but just remembering what he read. The sports pages in newspapers are also diligently examined. He also likes to watch debate programs on television and listens eagerly to historical chronicles and Viking sagas.

Riding, on the other hand, is a pastime that is more popular with his sisters. When he was four-and-a-half years old, again at the cabin in Tyinkrysset, Magnus had the chance to ride a horse four days in a row. Everyone thought this was terrific, but suddenly Magnus, who sat with his legs dangling on horseback, asked: 'Why do people ride horses?' It would be another five years before he climbed up on horseback again.

Magnus learned the rules of chess when he was five but nothing more that stopped him from still falling for Scholar's Mate as an eight-year-old, something that tends to be the first thing a beginner learns. It goes like this: 1.e4 e5 2.♗c4 ♘c6 3.♕h5 ♘f6 4.♕xf7 mate.

But then things finally began to happen. Magnus began to sit by himself and shuffle the pieces. He could sit for hours moving the pieces, in known and unknown patterns, finding combinations and repeating games or positions that his father had shown him. In this way, he developed a good feeling for the patterns of movement of the individual pieces.

Often he played with himself and generally looked for combinations for both sides. If, for example, White had pressure, he would readily let Black make a careless move that allowed a nice combination, which would give him great pleasure. In this way he built up a tactical eye and an interest for the secrets of chess combinations.

Eight years and seven months old he took part in his first tournament. In the Norwegian Championships in Gausdal in July 1999 Magnus scored 6½ out of 11 in the youngest class. He was not above leaving pawns hanging, but the starting gun of his career had sounded.

In the autumn Magnus played in many children's tournaments in his area and his progress was immediately explosive. By the time I first met Magnus in January 2000, again at a Gausdal tournament, it was easy to see that he was exceptionally talented.

2 A smart student

January 2000 to summer 2001

'He was not bad at all.'
– laconic comment by Anders Bekker-Jensen after he needed all the luck in the world to hold nine-year-old Magnus to a draw.

I remember well the first time I saw Magnus Carlsen. It was winter, an ice-cold January at Gausdal Høyfjellshotell, dubbed Norway's 'chess Mecca'. My students studying chess at NTG were competing in the traditional Troll Masters tournament and I had made the trip up on the final weekend to coach them. Alongside the international tournament there were several small open events and some of the students were playing in these instead. Magnus was as well.

I strolled around the playing hall and looked at the games with a stiff, neutral expression and without speaking to anyone so that no one would think that I was giving advice to my students. I know how it is when an opponent goes out to stretch his legs between moves and perhaps has a little chat in a foreign language with a compatriot. Maybe they are talking about what they are going to do later that evening or something else of little significance, but they may also be discussing possible variations in the game. One doesn't know and, either way, it is irritating. This is something that I have constantly tried to hammer into the heads of my restless students that scuttle around in radiant good humour and can't keep their mouths shut. During a chess game you don't talk to each other!

This was the reason that I was quite annoyed when one of my students came sweeping in with a big grin and loudly pointed out that a fellow pupil had a rook less than his tiny adversary, a boy that could barely reach across the board. Yes, it was a bit sensational. Anders Bekker-Jensen from Denmark, who at that time had a rating of about 1700, was hanging on by a thread against the little boy. But then, perhaps disturbed by the hubbub around him, Magnus blundered back and the game ended in a draw.

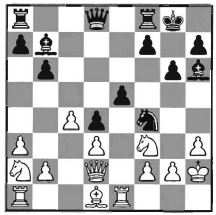
'He was not bad at all,' was Anders' laconic comment after the game. He didn't laugh. Maybe he had a dim suspicion that in four years and three months time that little boy would become the youngest grandmaster in the world.

The game against Anders has disappeared, but instead we can show Magnus' first victory in a standard tournament for adults. The victim was Erling Fløtten, former mayor of Finnmark County and ex-president of the Norwegian Chess Federation.

□ **Erling Fløtten**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Gausdal 2000

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 The easiest way to meet White's second move. With a pawn on c3 the queen cannot be chased from d5 and

the rule that the queen should not enter play so early in the game has less bearing. **3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗e2 g6** Magnus shows an early affection for fianchettoing – developing on the long diagonal – his dark-squared bishop as Black. **6.c4?** This creates a hole on d4 and cannot be good. **6...♕d8 7.♘c3 ♗g7 8.h3 0-0 9.d3 ♘c6 10.♗e3 b6 11.0-0** White should probably aim for equality with d3-d4 either here or on the next move. **11...♗b7 12.a3 ♘d4!** Magnus secures a space advantage. **13.♗xd4 cxd4 14.♘a2** What a sad spot for the knight. **14...♘h5!** There is an interesting outpost for the knight on f4. **15.♕d2 e5 16.♖fe1 ♘f4 17.♗d1 ♗h6** With a clear threat. **18.♔h2**



18...♘xg2!? Black could have also played the calm 18...f6 when the knight on f4 is taboo after 19.g3 ♔g7, but Magnus developed a taste for combinations early and goes for an interesting series of exchanges. **19.♕xh6 ♘xe1 20.♘xe1 ♕f6** The material situation is in balance but White's pieces must struggle to get active. **21.♔g3 ♕e6 22.f3 f5 23.♗c2 f4+!** Magnus exploits the exposed position of White's queen. **24.♔f2 ♖f5 25.♕h4 ♖h5 26.♕g4 ♕f6** The h-pawn is doomed as the bishop comes to c8 next move. **27.♕g2 ♗c8 28.♔e2 ♗xh3 29.♕f2 g5!** Time to roll forward. **30.♘g2 g4 31.♖g1 ♕f5 32.♘h4 ♕g5 33.fxg4** White is lost in any case. **33...♖xh4 34.♗b3 ♖xg4 35.♕f3 ♖g2+** 35...♖xg1 also wins, but there is no reason to allow counterplay. **36.♖xg2 ♕xg2+ 37.♕xg2+ ♗xg2** With an exchange and two pawns to the good Magnus wins easily. **38.c5+ ♔g7 39.cxb6 axb6 40.♘b4 h5 41.♘d5 ♗xd5 42.♗xd5 ♖d8 43.♗e4 ♔f6** Magnus has understood that the king should be active in the endgame. **44.a4 ♔g5 45.♔f2 ♖c8 46.b4 ♖c2+ 47.♔g1 ♖a2 48.♗c6 ♔g4 49.♔f1 ♔g3 50.a5 bxa5 51.bxa5 ♖xa5** and White resigned.

Magnus impressed in this Gausdal tournament even if he had just been actively playing tournament chess for half a year. The previous autumn Magnus and his father had sat and read Bent Larsen's 'Find the Plan', one of the many good books written by the old Danish world-beater. The book consists of lots of diagrams that pose the task: Find the plan! Simple and effective.

At Gausdal it was obvious that Magnus knew a bit about the opening. His father had some old chess biographies lying around, and Magnus had 'thumbed through' them. His first opening book was 'The Complete Dragon' by grandmaster Eduard Gufeld, a comprehensive work in English reckoned more for grandmasters than small boys who had just learned how to play.

It turned out that I knew Magnus' father. Henrik Carlsen and I had both played in Asker Chess Club when we were young. Now the Carlsen family lived in Lommedalen in Bærum, 15 kilometres west of Oslo and just a few kilometres from NTG, where I was working full-time as a chess trainer. I suggested that Magnus could start to train with former Norwegian junior

champion Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen, who at that time was working off his obligatory military service by instead doing civil service at NTG. This would turn out to be an especially fruitful pairing.

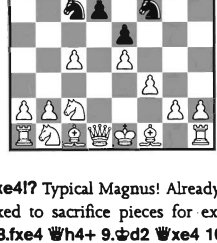
Training with Torbjørn began roughly in March, a few months after the first meeting at Gausdal. Just afterwards Magnus had a rating performance of about 1400 scoring 3½ points from 9 games in adult company at the Open Norwegian Championship, which also took place at the hotel near the beautiful Skeikampen mountain at Gausdal. This is roughly equivalent to the rating of the average Norwegian club player. On the official Norwegian rating list that appears each June Magnus nevertheless did not have more than 904, calculated on the basis of 34 games. His first tournament the previous autumn had not produced much and then it takes time to work your way up. Well, normally it takes some time, with Magnus it went at a record pace.

In the Norwegian Championship in Asker in July Magnus won the youngest group, for players under the age of eleven, with a score of 10 out of 11. He allowed only two draws after a pair of blunders. Just afterwards it was time to journey to Gausdal again, and now it was no longer a sacrificial lamb that took a seat among more established players. Magnus struck back with a fifty percent score (3½ from 7) in one tournament and 4 out of 6 in the quick-play event. The rating performance in the latter corresponded to about 1900.

Magnus and his family consider the Norwegian championship for junior teams in Oslo in September 2000 as his breakthrough. Magnus scored 3½ out of 5 against the top junior players in the country and achieved a rating performance of about 2000. Among others, he won he following fine game against Erik Eikeland, who had a rating of 1602 at that time.

□ **Erik Eikeland**
■ **Carlsen**
Oslo 2000

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 ♘c6 Black should equalise after 5...e5 6.♗b5+ and now either 6...♘bd7 or 6...♗d7, though it is not completely simple. **6.c4 e5!?** Now this thrust is more committal since Black cannot follow it up with d6-d5, but Magnus has an idea. **7.♘c2**



7...♘xe4!? Typical Magnus! Already then he liked to sacrifice pieces for exciting play. **8.fxe4 ♕h4+ 9.♔d2 ♕xe4 10.♕f3** 10.♘c3 is probably better. **10...♕h4 11.♗e2 ♗e6 12.♘ba3** White could definitely have developed better. Now Black quickly gets to execute d6-d5 with overwhelming compensation for the knight. **12...0-0-0 13.g3 ♕e7 14.b4 d5! 15.c5 e4 16.♕f1 d4** White's king is in grave danger.

17.♗c4 d3 18.♘e3 ♘d4 White cannot maintain the blockade. The arrival of a strong knight on f3 is the first wave. **19.♗xe6+ ♕xe6 20.♘ac4 ♘f3+ 21.♔d1 ♗e7!** All pieces must join in! **22.♘d2 ♗f6 23.♖b1** The game is over. After 23.♘xf3 exf3 is the simplest. **23... ♕xa2 24.♘ec4 ♕c2** mate.

There would be many breakthroughs after this but this was definitely the first time he was featured in a chess column, that is, in mine, in the Norwegian newspaper VG.

The training with Torbjørn was obviously bearing fruit, although they did not meet more often than once a week, for sessions of two hours. Joining the workouts were Brede Hagen, a two year older boy who also lived nearby, and sometimes Atle Bøyum Fossum, who is a year older than Magnus. It is important that such training be pleasurable and fun and a little group with a bit of atmosphere is a fine approach.

But what really happened at these sessions with Torbjørn? They must have been doing something right! Magnus made tremendous progress during this time. In a year his rating rose over 1,000 points, from 904 to 1907, which is an enormous amount. Brede and Atle, his two training chums, had more normal progress, so it is clear that Magnus' talent was a factor. You can't teach people chess in the sense of pouring knowledge over their heads, but you can provide a stimulus. If you first get a player hooked, bitten by the bug, then things can go incredibly quickly. This was not a program of systematic training. I remember well Torbjørn rummaging around in the bookshelf just before his students arrived and wondering what he would do that day. I was lucky enough to get review copies of all the newest titles from the major chess publishers for my column in VG, so we have eventually built up an impressive library at NTG. There was never a problem finding interesting material, it was nearly just a question of pulling out a book and getting started.

Playing through their own games was naturally a part of the training, but mostly they sat around a board, playing through and discussing grandmaster games. Torbjørn showed many of his own games. He was especially good at the English Opening, which begins 1.c4, so there were lessons on that. Since then Magnus has impressed with a formidable opening repertoire. He can start a game just as easily with 1.e4 as with 1.d4 and appears to know everything. But English Openings have been scarce, perhaps that ground had been too well tilled. One often plays best when one experiments a bit and tests new openings. If you play something you know well, routine can quickly set in and your creative powers can drop. I remember also long analysis sessions on the Petroff Defence in these hours with Torbjørn, and also this has been a rarity in Magnus' later games.

Torbjørn himself went from 2104 to 2204 in rating during the year he trained with Magnus. This reflects the experience I have had. One learns nearly as much from teaching others. As a student one can quickly become a passive receiver of information, which is not ideal. It did not take too long before Torbjørn came and

said that I would soon have to take over Magnus' training. The student was becoming too good for him! I am now in the process of being able to say the same. I am still a fraction ahead of Magnus on the rating lists and the only player left for him to pass in Norway.

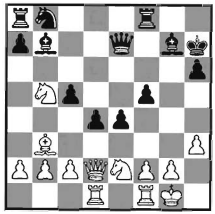
By autumn 2000, after half a year of training with Torbjørn, Magnus was so good that I was not in the least worried about inviting him along to the large open tournament in Bad Wiessee, an hour's drive south of Munich on the southern edge of Germany. Magnus' father came along and also training partner Brede, in addition to a gang of nine NTG students. The playing hall lay beautifully against the Tegernsee lake, with a view to the Alps in the south. Even for jaded Norwegians spoiled by natural scenery at home it was an experience to just stroll through the streets in that gorgeous town. We were a large enough group to occupy an entire guesthouse on our own, Haus Bildstein, where an elderly lady waited on us as if we were her own grandchildren.

Nine-year-old Magnus began the tournament with a victory over Klaus Gschwendtner (rating 2116) from Germany and quickly became the darling of the event. One is always a bit nervous before such baptisms of fire – or when tossing people into deep water to teach them to swim. But there was no reason to worry on Magnus' behalf. The points just kept rolling in and more spectators began to gather to watch the little boy in action. After nine rounds Magnus had tallied up 4½ points against opposition rated over 2100 on average.

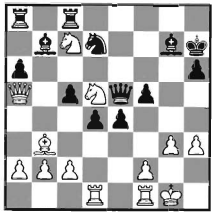
Crowds had not gathered around Magnus just because he was small, he also played some fine games. Against Günter Kaiser (2095), one of the local players, Magnus provided a demonstration of both the power of the bishop pair and the significance of controlling the centre.

□ **Günter Kaiser**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Bad Wiessee 2000

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘c3 g6 4.e4 ♗g7 5.♗e2 0-0 6.0-0 We have arrived at a Pirc Defence by transposition of moves. White has a fine pawn centre but Black has several possible ways to counter. The most usual are 6...♗g4, 6...c6 or 6...♘c6, but Magnus' move is also completely normal. **6...e5 7.♗e3** If White takes twice on e5 (7.dxe5 dxe5 8.♘xe5) there follows 8...♘xe4 and Black regains his pawn. **7...h6 8.♕d2** White is not alert. One cannot surrender the dark-squared bishop like this and expect to gain an advantage. **8...♘g4!** Magnus pounces on his opportunity. **9.d5 f5 10.exf5 gxf5 11.h3** Black threatened to trap the bishop with 11...f4. **11...♘xe3 12.♕xe3 e4** Magnus chooses to activate his wonderful dark-squared bishop at once. **13.♘d4 ♕e7 14.♖ad1 c5 15.dxc6 bxc6** Ah, what a sad fate for White's magnificent centre! Now it is Black who is in the process of building up a central pawn bastion. **16.♗c4+ ♔h7 17.♘ce2** White dreams perhaps of achieving a blockade position, but it is at best short-lived. **17...d5 18.♗b3 c5** Magnus storms forward. **19.♘b5 d4 20.♕d2 ♗b7** A more total domination of the centre than this is hard to picture. Note also the powerful bishops that stand like field can-



nons in the background.. **21.♘f4 a6 22.♘d5** White tries to complicate but Magnus sidesteps this easily. **22...♕e5 23.♘bc7 ♖a7** Now the knights are dangling. **24.♕a5 ♘d7 25.g3 ♖c8 26.♘b5 ♖aa8 27.♘bc7**



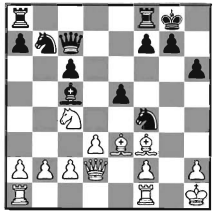
27. ... ♗xd5! It is time to cash in on the rewards of good positional play. **28.♘xa8** 28.♘xd5 is answered with 28...c4. **28...♖xa8** Magnus has a materially decisive advantage as well as all of his positional trumps. **29.♗a4 ♗e6 30.♔h2 f4** White is overrun. **31.♕e1 ♘f6 32.♗c6 ♖c8 33.♗b7 ♖c7 34.♗a8 ♗d5 35.♗xd5 ♘xd5 36.♕e2 fxg3+** After 37.fxg3 ♘e3 Black wins even more material.

I was also impressed by watching the way Magnus read chess books. While the others lay around and relaxed or clowned around in their rooms, Magnus lay in his bed and read grandmaster John Emms' 'The Open Games with Black', a brilliant book that covers everything but the Ruy Lopez/Spanish that one can meet when answering 1.e4 with 1...e5. That the book was in English and at a level more suited for top international players did not appear to worry Magnus in the slightest. He didn't need to get out a board and pieces either, he simply read the games from the book without a problem. In the following game against Holger Bartels (2170) from Germany he made use of his bedtime reading.

□ **Holger Bartels**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Bad Wiessee 2000

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.♘g5 I would think that Bartels envisioned a capture on f7 and material gain in a few moves, but he is seriously mistaken. **4...d5 5.exd5 ♘a5 6.♗b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♗e2 h6 9.♘h3** Maybe White is beginning to smell a rat. The main variation continues 9.♘f3, but the little boy suddenly seems very well prepared. Maybe he has learned a long theoretical variation? Perhaps it is wiser to choose something rarer? But Magnus is just as ready for this move, an old idea of Wilhelm Steinitz (1836-1900) which Bobby Fischer reintroduced in two games in 1963. **9...♗c5 10.0-0 ♗xh3** Something similar happened also in the game Fischer-Bisguier, Poughkeepsie 1963, but the most modern move is perhaps 10...g5, which Magnus played against me in a blitz game just before he became a grandmaster in Dubai three and a half years later. **11.gxh3 ♘e4** Now at least the game is on new ground, though there is no reason for that to com-

fort White. Black already threatens a queen check on g5. **12.d3 ♘g5 13.♗e3** White could have tried to hold the pawn with 13.♔g2. **13...♘xh3+ 14.♔g2 ♘f4+ 15.♔h1 ♘b7 16.♗f3 ♕b6 17.♘d2 0-0** Magnus has finally completed his development. Both sides have their share of weaknesses and assets. The position is probably roughly equal. **18.♘c4 ♕c7 19.♕d2**



19...♗xe3 This is an interesting decision. Magnus was obviously aware that White gets to correct his pawn structure now and also regains control over f4, but in return Black gets a pawn majority on the kingside and mobility for the knight on b7. **20.fxe3 ♘d5 21.♕g2 ♖ad8 22.♕g3 ♖de8 23.♗e4 ♘d6 24.♖g1 g5** A mature decision – the attack on the g-file is stopped for good. The problems on the f-file are not as serious. **25.♘xd6 ♕xd6 26.♖af1 ♕e6 27.♕f3 ♘e7 28.♕f6 ♕xf6 29.♖xf6 ♔g7 30.♖gf1 ♖c8 31.c3 ♘d5 32.♗xd5 cxd5 33.♖a6** We enter the game's final phase. Magnus has held his own in the middlegame and he does not go wrong in the demanding double rook endgame. **33...♖b8 34.b3 ♖bc8 35.c4 dxc4 36.dxc4 ♖c7!** Now the other rook is free to manoeuvre. **37.♖ff6** White must prevent 37...f5. **37...♖d8 38.♖fd6 ♖cd7** Magnus wins the battle for the board's only open file. **39.♖xd7 ♖xd7 40.c5 f5** An exciting race begins. **41.b4 e4 42.b5 f4 43.♔g2 f3+ 44.♔f2 ♖d2+ 45.♔g1** White comes too late if he tries for more with 45.♔e1. Black manages to grab the h-pawn, handle White's most advanced passed pawn and go in with his own g-pawn. **45...♖d1+ 46.♔f2 ♖d2+ 47.♔g1 ♖d1+ 48.♔f2 ♖d2+** and here the game ended in a draw.

This is play of a high level, and certainly not something one sees from a nine-year-old with a rating of 904.

During the tournament we rented a large car and had just enough time to visit the famous winter sports locale in Garmisch Partenkirchen on the day before we had to head to the airport in Munich. But in classic style we couldn't manage to make up our minds. Some of the group wanted to go to Salzburg, an hour's drive in the other direction instead. After much fumbling and discussion we eventually understood that it was too late to do either, and the disappointment was easy to read in Magnus' face. But at least we took with us some grand walks in the nearby mountains and the fantastic view of the Alps. Magnus and his father got to visit all of the spots they desired in peace and quiet when they returned to the same tournament the next year, without the gang from NTG.

A few tears also appeared when Magnus lost to Jon Ludvig Hammer, another talented player of Magnus' age, in the Under-10 class of the Norwegian Youth championships a few weeks after the first Bad Wiessee tournament. Magnus usually tackles a loss in exemplary fashion, but now he was afraid that participation in the Nordic championship in Iceland early the next year was about to go down the

drain. Later in the tournament Jon Ludvig also had to drop a point and in the end four players finished on 6/7. But Magnus had the best tie-break – his opponents had scored a bit higher than the opponents of his rivals – and so the title was his and he secured one of the qualifying spots to the Nordic championship after all.

But first there was another Gausdal tournament to play. After chess promoter Arnold J. Eikrem's passing in 1996 many feared the era of Gausdal events might end. For over 25 years Arnold organised major tournaments in steady succession in Norway's mountain wilds. Gausdal was the place for young Norwegian chess players to test their skills against strong foreign players and fight for international title norms. Following up Eikrem's activity is impossible, but with Hans Olav Lahlum spearheading the effort, many of the traditional events were preserved, among them the Troll Masters in January.

Inspired by his performance in Bad Wiessee, this time Magnus entered the top group in Gausdal. His score of 3 out of 9 was perhaps modest but his opposition was strong and his rating performance was well over 2000. And, in some games Magnus got to demonstrate his great positional understanding. As in this example against Goran Fant (2062) from Sweden, where he exploits his grip on the black squares in the Winawer variation of the French Defence.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Goran Fant**
Gausdal 2001

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 Magnus has since not completely come to grips with Black's convoluted play in this variation, where Black surrenders his dark-squared bishop in order to give White doubled c-pawns and has chosen 3.e5 instead in several games. **3...♗b4 4.e5 ♘e7 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 b6** Black dreams of exchanging white-squared bishops and eventually mounting pressure on the c-file but Magnus is alert and starts active play on the kingside at once. **7.♕g4 ♘f5** After 7...♘g6 Black achieves his desired trade of bishops but White nevertheless gets the initiative on the kingside. **8.♗d3 h5 9.♕h3 c5**

10.♗xf5! A very impressive move considering Magnus' tender years. It takes great strategical understanding, and generally a good deal of experience to comprehend the worth of White's domination of the dark squares in this type of position. **10...exf5 11.♕g3 ♔f8 12.h4** Magnus clearly shows that he understands that this position is all about dark square control. **12...♘c6 13.♗g5 f6** An ugly move, but White's knight sails into f4 anyway. **14.exf6 gxf6 15.♗e3 ♕e7 16.♘e2 ♗e6 17.0-0** 17.♘f4 may have been more precise, but White has a clear positional advantage here too. **17...♔f7 18.♘f4 ♖ag8 19.♕f3 ♕d7 20.♖ad1 c4 21.♖fe1! ♖g4 22.g3 ♔f8?** A mistake in a bad position. Magnus plans ♗e3-c1 and maybe a3-a4

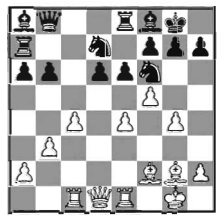
and developing the bishop to a3. Doubling rooks on the e-file is also on the agenda. **23.♘xe6+ ♕xe6 24.♗h6+-** White wins with a discovery on the queen. **24...♔f7 25.♖xe6 ♔xe6 26.♗f4 ♘e7 27.♖e1+ ♔d7 28.♕e3** Black resigned.

With seven active grandmasters Iceland is the world's decidedly strongest chess nation per capita. Interest in the game is great and their heroes are well cared for. Magnus' first meeting with the chess enthusiasts on this island came in February 2001. Magnus had learned from his mistake in the Norwegian Youth championship a few months earlier. With 5½ out of 6 he took clear first place in the youngest class of the Nordic championships. Magnus would learn that the gold hangs higher in international championships, but in the Nordic countries, which include Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands, he was now supreme in his age group. Norway had finally produced an international medal candidate.

Many times in Magnus' career I have asked myself where he gets his strength. In the game against Bela Badea Takacs (2492) from the last round of the Open Norwegian championship in Oslo, Easter 2001, I felt this question arise. Magnus had the Romanian grandmaster on his knees after sophisticated manoeuvring in the so-called Hedgehog position.

□ **Bela Badea Takacs**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2001

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 b6 3.♗g2 ♗b7 4.0-0 c5 5.d3 e6 6.e4 d6 7.♖e1 ♗e7 8.c4 0-0 An extremely natural move; but perhaps 8...a6 is more precise when Black can post his queen more actively on c7 without being disturbed by a knight on b5. **9.♘c3 ♘bd7 10.d4 cxd4 11.♘xd4** Now a well-known structure has been reached. White has used one more move than usual with his d-pawn but it does not change the character of the position in any way. Black intends to defend patiently with his somewhat conservative set-up. **11...♕b8** White threatened 12.e5. **12.f4 ♖c8 13.b3 ♗f8 14.♗e3 a6 15.♖c1 ♖a7 16.♗f2 ♗a8** Magnus manoeuvres for gold. For an experienced Hedgehog player this idea is well known, but that Magnus at the age of just ten is already conversant with such finesses impresses me greatly. **17.f5 ♖e8 18.g4**



18...exf5! Normally Black aims for counterplay with a break with either his b-, d-, or e-pawn but the black position also contains other possibilities. **19.♘xf5 ♘c5 20.♘g3 ♖ae7** Suddenly White is in great danger. **21.♘d5** What else? After 21.♕f3 Black can just keep capturing on e4, and after 21.♕c2 g4 is hanging. **21...♗xd5 22.exd5 ♖xe1+ 23.♗xe1 ♖xe1+! 24.♕xe1 ♘d3 25.♕d1 ♘xc1** It looks as if Magnus has outplayed the grandmaster but it is not quite over as long

as White has counterplay on the kingside. **26.g5 ♘xa2 27.gxf6 ♘b4** White threatened 28.♕d2. **28.fxg7 ♗xg7 29.♗e4 ♕e8 30.♕g4 ♔h8 31.♔f1 ♕d8?** After 31...♗e5 Black should not be in danger. **32.♘h5 ♗e5 33.♕f5 ♕g8 34.♘f6** Suddenly things are getting very uncomfortable. **34...♗xf6 35.♕xf6+ ♕g7 36.♕d8+ ♕g8 37.♕xd6 a5 38.♕xb6 ♕e8 39.♕h6** 1-0 A sad finish, but the game testifies to Magnus' great understanding.

On the World Chess Federation (FIDE) rating list for April 2001 Magnus was listed at 2064. So there was no apparent danger with letting Magnus compete in one of the IM-groups in the Gausdal Classics just after Easter. With the ten competitors having an average rating of 2237 it was a challenge, but compared to the strength Magnus had shown recently, most people figured he would tackle this as well. Still, it was a bit scary when he started with just one draw and four losses in the first five games. Maybe the opposition was just a bit too tough after all?

Chess is a bit like boxing. One should avoid getting too much of a beating. I remember the Dutch grandmaster John van der Wiel telling me about this theory. Those that become truly good tend to have a straight, rising curve. Concepts like adversity and stagnation do not exist in their minds. In this way they build up enormous self-confidence, which in turn generates good results and so one has a positive circle in full swing, where self-confidence and rating rise one after the other. If, on the other hand, one gets some hard knocks, it is easier to become insecure and stagnate.

Magnus managed to make it to dry land with four closing draws. This meant an honourable final result of 2½ out of 9 and a performance of well over 2000. The turning point came in round seven when Magnus for the first time held a draw against an international titleholder, international master Marian Petrov (2425) from Bulgaria.

□ **Marian Petrov**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Gausdal 2001

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.d4 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗g4 6.♗e2 cxd4 The simplest. After 6...e6 White has the possibility c3-c4. **7.cxd4 e6 8.♘c3 ♗b4** It is also completely normal to retreat the queen to either d6, d8 or a5. **9.0-0 ♕a5 10.a3 ♗xc3 11.bxc3 ♘f6** 11...♕xc3 12.♖b1 looks dangerous but is not completely clear. **12.♖b1 0-0 13.♖b5 ♕c7** Now 13...♕xc3 doesn't work because of 14.♗b2 and the queen is trapped. **14.h3 ♗f5 15.♘h4 ♗g6 16.♘xg6 hxg6 17.♗f3 a6 18.♖c5** White must play actively with the rook in order not to stand worse. **18...♘d7 19.♖g5 ♘e7 20.♕b3 ♖ab8 21.g3**

21...♖bc8 A clear solution to the situation, but one that demands precise calculation.

22.♕xb7 ♕xb7 23.♗xb7 ♖xc3 24.♗d2 After 24.♗xa6 ♘f5 White's pieces are hopelessly placed. **24...♖xa3 25.♗b4 ♖b3 26.♗xe7 ♖e8** The end of a long variation. **27.♗xa6 ♖xe7 28.♖c1 ♘f6 29.♖c8+ ♖e8 30.♖gc5 ♖b8 31.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 32.♔g2 ♖d8 33.♖c4** The position is dead drawn. **33...♔f8 34.♔f3 ♖b8 35.♖c3 ♘d5 36.♖c5 ♖b4 37.♔e4 ♘f6+ 38.♔e3 ♖b3+ 39.♔e2 ♖b2+ 40.♔f3 ♖b4 41.♔e3 ♘d5+ 42.♔e4 ♘f6+ 43.♔e3 ♖b3+ 44.♔e2 ♖b2+** Draw.

Also tournament organiser Hans Olav Lahlum could exhale in relief after this. He had been worried before the event that the bar had been placed too high, but afterwards he was nothing but smiles. 'I will never again be afraid to invite him to tournaments – there is just one Magnus and he perfectly illustrates my motto – never underestimate children!'

There are many random events that play a decisive role in one's life. The cards are not dealt out equally. We come from different countries and different places and end up in different environments, with all the conditions and directives this involves. But the most important thing is family. Magnus has been lucky in this respect. Magnus is number two of four children. He has a sister, Ellen, who is a year and a half older, and two younger sisters, Ingrid and Signe, who are three and six years younger respectively. Both of his parents are educated as engineers, but his mother has been home with the children for some years. For the past year the whole family has followed Magnus around the world as he played in tournaments. Such a decision is not taken on impulse. Already a few years earlier, when Magnus was still at the beginning of his meteoric career, his father gave up his job and began to work for himself, in order to have greater flexibility.

Magnus is also luckily equipped with four healthy grandparents who if need be can help out when he is travelling to tournaments and his parents happen to have no time. But mainly it has been father Henrik that has journeyed with Magnus, and almost never have they had chess specialists along to assist. While other super-strong young striplings, usually Eastern European, arrive with full-time trainers for major championships, Magnus has by and large had to manage on his own. Many have been startled by this but it can have done him good. Chess is, after all, a lonely battle. When one sits at the board it does no good to look for help. It could be an advantage sometimes to have a second to help with opening preparation but when one is acquainted with Magnus' formidable ability to devour and remember chess books, one can just as well reason that a second could be as likely to disturb as to assist.

In my healthy youthful years I had Egil 'Drillo' Olsen as a football trainer at Oslo first division club Lyn for a time. Just afterwards he took over the national squad with fantastic results. People talked about systems and the Norwegian model, but I think the real explanation for Drillo's success was his ability to give players faith in themselves. One cannot perform 'miracles' without a foundation of preliminary mental preparation. I remember well an incident where I was with Drillo at an international match at our national football arena, Ullevål Stadium, which incidentally

was also my home pitch for Lyn. When Jørn Andersen emerged alone against the keeper and scored for Norway, Drillo commented drily to me, 'You could have done that, too.' Those words have stayed with me since, like a mantra and I have tried to pass these words of wisdom on to my students as best I can. In a mental sport like chess it is vital to work on psychology.

When one works with fantastic talents, perhaps the most important task is not to botch anything. One can fertilise and water, but I have no faith in an authoritarian style in this context. On the chessboard Magnus is boss regardless. In the summer of 2001 Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen was finished with his civil service at NTG and his time as trainer was past. Magnus began as an absolute beginner with a rating of 904 in June 2000. The next year he was rated 1907 and was among the best junior players in the country.

3 First successes abroad

July-December 2001

'I am proud to be married to someone who has beaten a future world champion.'
– Grandmaster Artur Kogan on his wife's defeat of ten-year-old Magnus.

Magnus advanced quickly. In the Norwegian championship in Kristiansund in July 2001 he was already competing in the Under-20 section, the Junior class. It was no longer interesting to win the 'Miniputt' (U-11), 'Lilleputt' (U-13) or Cadet (U-16) classes, where he would have been the obvious favourite. The Junior class, on the other hand, was still a challenge.

Magnus was not quite able to follow up his recent series of good results in international tournaments. As many child stars before him have experienced, it is not as easy to play against fellow up-and-coming junior players as it is to face older, established players. Magnus struggled with those rated 1600-1700, even if his performances in previous events had consistently been over 2000.

In Kristiansund Magnus played a few too many draws to finish at the very top and ended up with 5½ out of 9 and sixth place. As it was, Magnus would not get another chance to win the Junior class. Next year he would take part in the Elite class, which is reserved for the top 20 of the roughly 500 players that annually take part in the national championships.

Magnus was Norwegian Miniputt champion in 2000, and he also won the national U-10 title later that year before taking the Nordic title in the same class early in 2001. And as we will see later in this chapter, he also took a national title in the U-12 division late in the autumn of 2001 before going on to win the Nordic version of this class a few months later. Yet, there will hardly be more of these types of medals. At Magnus' current level not even Nordic titles for age groups are especially attractive – he is just too good. It is no fun playing tournaments where, psychologically speaking, one has everything to lose. He may well stop competing in various European and world championships in age classes in the future also – Magnus thrives much better in the role of challenger.

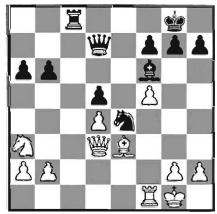
The long-term goal in any case is much wider than winning such championships. Magnus has had various external goals but his true aim is to master the game and develop as a player – besides the obvious desire to continue to enjoy playing chess. This creates a different focus. The degree of success is not necessarily measured in points and final placings but rather in how much one has learned. In these age-limited championships such an attitude is out of place.

Two weeks after the Norwegian championships in Kristiansund it was time to travel to western Norway again, this time

on the night train with grandmother. The Bergen International in 2001 had the added status of acting as the Nordic championship, which made the event stronger than usual, with seven grandmasters and an array of international masters taking part. But Magnus was not to be intimidated. He got off to a stunning start with a win over Stig Gabrielsen (2280), who had played sixth board for the Norwegian Olympic team in Istanbul in Turkey the year before.

□ **Stig Gabrielsen**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Bergen 2001

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.e3 A limp move. White must get his dark-squared bishop outside of his pawn chain if he is to hope for an advantage. **5...0-0 6.♕c2 b6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♗d3 c5 9.♘e5 ♗a6** The way the game develops it turns out to be great to trade light-squared bishops but 9...♗b7 followed by 10...♘c6 was also a solid alternative. **10.0-0 ♗xd3 11.♕xd3 ♕c7 12.f4?!** White dreams of a sweeping kingside attack but without the light-squared bishop it will be hard work making this happen. **12...♘c6 13.♖f3?** Gabrielsen is sleeping in class. He must play 13.♔h1 to be able to recapture on d4 without being hit by a pin. **13...cxd4 14.♘xc6** A sad necessity since 14.exd4 is answered by 14...♘xd4! and White cannot recapture without losing his queen. **14...♕xc6 15.exd4 ♖fe8 16.f5 ♘e4!** Black has a positional superiority with full control over the central square e4. **17.♗f4 ♗f6 18.♘b5** White's only active move in this game, but the threat of 19.♘c7 is easy to parry. **18...♖ec8 19.♖c1 ♕d7 20.♖ff1 ♖xc1 21.♗xc1 ♖c8 22.♗e3 a6 23.♘a3?** A hideous move. White must put the knight on c3 and hope for a draw. Now Black dominates completely with his titanic knight on e4.



23...♕a4 24.♕b3 ♕xb3 25.axb3 ♘d6 26.g4 h6 27.♔f2 b5! Black threatens 28...b4 and the rook will invade the position on c2. **28.♖a1 b4 29.♘b1 ♖c2+ 30.♔f3 ♖xb2 31.♘d2 ♘b5 32.♖xa6** White has finally created an active piece but it is too late. **32...♘xd4+ 33.♔g3 ♘xb3 34.♘f3 ♔h7 35.h4 d4 36.♗f4 ♘c5 37.♖a7 ♘e4+ 38.♔h3 ♖f2!** Puts an end to White's wriggling. **39.g5 ♖xf3+ 40.♔g4 ♖f1 41.♖xf7 hxg5** White resigned.

He followed this up with a draw against grandmaster Thröstur Thorhallson (2456) from Iceland:

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Thröstur Thorhallsson**
Bergen 2001

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.f3 One has to know some opening theory to play like this. In the normal variations after 5.bxa6 Black gets long-term compensation for the pawn without anything special

happening at once. Now there is more direct play. **axb5 6.e4 ♕a5+ 7.♗d2 ♕b6** After 7...b4 White sets up with 8.♘a3, 9.♘c4 and a quick break with a2-a3. **8.♕b3 ♗a6 9.♘a3 b4 10.♘c4 ♕c7** This looks dangerous for Black, but also after 10...♗xc4 11.♗xc4 White can make a quick break with his a-pawn. **11.a3 e6 12.♕e3! ♗xc4** White threatened 13.d6 with a fork on e5 if Black captures. **13.♗xc4 ♗e7 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.e5 ♘d5 16.♕e4 ♘c6 17.f4** White now emerges nicely with all his pieces - he probably has a clear advantage. **17...♘b6 18.♘f3 bxa3 19.♖xa3 ♖xa3 20.bxa3 ♘xc4 21.♕xc4 ♕a7 22.0-0 0-0** The Icelandic grandmaster doesn't dare take on a3. Magnus was ready to sacrifice another pawn with f4-f5, but this is not completely clear. **23.♗c3** Now 23...♕xa3 no longer works because of 24.♖a1. **23...g6 24.♖d1 ♖b8 25.h4 ♖b7 26.h5** Magnus is not concerned about his a-pawn at all. **26...♕xa3 27.hxg6 hxg6**

28.♖xd7 This was the idea, but it only leads to a draw. **28...♖xd7 29.♕xe6+ ♔g7 30.♕xd7 ♕xc3 31.♕xc6 ♕e3+ 32.♔f1 ♕xf4** Perhaps Black stands slightly better because of his passed c-pawn but with some precise moves Magnus ensures he has an impregnable fortress. **33.♕b7 ♕c4+ 34.♔g1 ♕e6 35.♕e4 c4 36.♔f1 c3 37.♘d4 ♕c4+ 38.♔e1 ♕a2 39.♘c2 ♕b1+ 40.♔e2 ♕b5+ 41.♔f3** Black can check as much as he wants, the queen on e4 covers everything. **41...♕f1+ 42.♔g3 ♕c1 43.♔f3 ♗c5 44.♕d3 ♔h6 45.♕e4 ♕f1+ 46.♔g4 ♕d1+ 47.♔g3 ♔g7 48.♕b7+ ♔h6 49.♕e4 ♔g7 50.♕b7+ ♔h6 51.♕e4 ♔g7 52.♕b7+** Draw.

This was Magnus' first half point against a grandmaster. Since then he has had an especially good grip on Icelanders of this sort.

The rest of the tournament was heavier going. Magnus simply became tired. In primary school one has tests that may last an hour or two. In secondary school an exam can last four or five hours, university exams can be even longer. The length of a chess game varies but an average of about four hours – like a tough exam – is most likely. When one sits nine such exams in a row, which is really how a chess tournament can feel, everyone becomes tired, but a ten-year-old is less physically equipped to stand such a strain.

Women, on the other hand, should not have any physical disadvantages in a cerebral sport like chess. In the seventh round Magnus lost to Tatiana Plachkinova, an elegant lady from Bulgaria with a 2190 rating who came with her then boyfriend and eventual husband, grandmaster Artur Kogan from Israel. In a congratulatory mail after Magnus became a grandmaster just three years later, Artur Kogan could not restrain himself from pointing out how proud he was 'to be married to someone who had beaten a future world champion'.

Kogan was in top form in Bergen and won the event with an impressive score of 8/9. Magnus had to settle for 3½ and 71st place out of 95 participants.

Bergen's annual games festival ran alongside the tournament, with the unofficial Norwegian championships in a number of events, from Monopoly to Ludo to Backgammon. The festival ended with the Norwegian championship in 'café-chess' at the Sardinen Café on the Bergen docks on Friday night. The time control was ten minutes per player for the entire game and the organisers made it especially clear that both loud conversation and beer drinking were welcome, also during play. With all of the stars from the international tournament present there was nevertheless considerable prestige at stake. There was no age limit.

As it grew late the playing site began to fill with smoke and noise, but this didn't appear to bother Magnus. He started with four wins in a row, including the scalp of Emanuel Berg (2496) from Sweden, who had two grandmaster results then and was on the verge of gaining the title. Magnus eventually had to give up his bid to win the tournament but his win over Berg at least showed what he was made of.

Einar Gausel, Norwegian grandmaster and columnist in the newspaper Dagbladet, is usually dispassionate in his judgements, but during this café championship he became very impressed by an unusual detail – the way Magnus physically moved the pieces. I have also often been struck by this. From time to time one sees actors who completely fail when they try to imitate chess players on stage or in films. They are completely unconvincing. They should have watched Magnus. He exudes feeling and self-confidence with each hand movement over the board.

The chess scene is fascinating and anything but monomaniacal. All sorts can be found here. It is nearly impossible to point to one common trait that distinguishes chess players as a group – except that they all like chess. 'Gens Una Sumus' is the world federation's motto, 'We are all one family'. Chess unites us. What language you speak or what clothes you wear make no difference. The chess goddess Caissa's power works on poor and rich, boy and girl, smart and the less smart – and not least, young and old.

So for Magnus at age ten to be knocking around in chess circles was eventually something completely natural, both for him and for far older players. The Bergen International was perhaps a small social breakthrough in this way. There were not very many of his peers there but Magnus seemed to thrive very well in his role as mascot. He also became a natural part of the NTG crowd, where everyone thought it was fun that a little boy was getting ready to surge past them in playing strength.

After Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen ended his civil service term at NTG it was a natural step for me to take over as Magnus' trainer. We didn't manage more than just a few meetings in the first half year. But Magnus had long been independent. He was active in longer international tournaments, blitz events and minor local competitions plus he trained on his own as well.

Magnus had now discovered how entertaining it was to play chess on the Internet.

Over the last three years he has managed to play about 7,000 games at the Internet Chess Club (ICC), the world's largest online chess club. At the ICC there are always opponents, no matter what your playing level is. It is also very practical, all you need is Internet access and you can communicate and play against opponents from all over the world in the blink of an eye.

After his recent successes Magnus has won a solid band of fans at the huge Internet club. If he plays a single blitz game with, for example, three minutes each for the whole game, about a hundred people from around the world quickly tune in to watch

During major events there is usually live coverage of games at the club, with several hundred spectators tossing off comments and chatting to each other. Magnus' games are popular viewing. When he drew Kasparov, the world's highest rated player, in Reykjavik 2004 about 1,500 people were following the match 'ringside' at the ICC – in addition to all of those who followed the action at the organisers' web site.

The Internet has truly revolutionised the chess world. We suddenly have a common arena for grandmasters and ten-year-old boys. You can also make friends from all over the world this way. I know people who have met both a spouse and business partners from distant lands via the ICC. The motto Gens Una Sumus applies more than ever.

In the middle of September the way was paved for the first Nordic championship for club teams on the Internet. The winners of the respective national team championships in ordinary chess were eligible, the arena – the ICC. The time limit was 20 minutes per player for the entire game and five extra seconds added per move. Physically, the Norwegian players sat in the computer room at NTG monitored by an arbiter, while the players from Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and the Faeroe Islands did more or less the same in their respective venues.

Icelandic Taflfélagið Hellir, led by four grandmasters, were clear favourites but against Asker Schakklub, who turned up with a ten-year-old on sixth – and last – board, they had to admit defeat. Magnus did his job, especially in this match, by beating Ingvar Ásmundsson (2359) and taking 3/5 points.

Magnus' original club is Bærum Schakselskap but he soon transferred to NTG chess club when he began to train there. In the autumn of 2001, when Asker could tempt him with participation in the first Nordic Internet championship followed by the European Cup for club teams in Crete, a new transfer was in order. NTG's club was at that time a tiny club for individual chess students far from home, together with my brother Espen, former leader of the Norwegian Youth Chess Federation Ole Valaker and myself, who had all contributed to the chess school in different ways. We took part in the league system and also organised some local tournaments, but were and are not an ordinary club with weekly meetings.

Nor could Bærum chess club offer very much at that time. By contrast, Asker had traditional weekly meetings with a spring and autumn tournament spread over the semester. Magnus joined Asker in

autumn 2000 and won the club's B-group championship at once. In the winter of 2000 he came third in the A-group and in the autumn of 2001 he won the club championship with a majestic score of 8/9, including a win over Jøran Jansson, the club's anchor and motor.

Since then Magnus has not had time to take part in Asker's club events, there has been too much travelling to do. But blitz tournaments and things that only take a single evening can always fit into his schedule, and especially Oslo Schakselskap (OSS) staged many powerful short events like this.

Those baffled by the many spellings for chess clubs in Norway may be interested to know that they are linked to the age of the club. OSS was founded in 1884, then as Christiania Schakselskap, and is the country's oldest club. Bergens Schakklub started in 1902, followed by Bærum Schakklub in 1920 and Asker Schaklub in 1922. Norway's language conflicts were clearly not over then, and it was obvious that there was no consensus on how 'sjakklub' -chess club – should be written.

Doing well in the European Club Cup is no easy matter for a Norwegian club. Even a team strong enough to win the Nordic is a punching bag in an event where many of the teams field awesome line-ups with super-grandmasters on all boards. So the Asker gang viewed the trip to the Crete championship as a holiday where one could watch the 'big boys' in action and maybe try their hand against a top team or two.

For Magnus at least, it was a big event to sit in the same hall with so many of the world's best players. But he also did well in this tough field and was the team's top scorer with 4½ out of 7 on sixth board. Ingvar Ásmundsson, the Icelander Magnus had beaten just before, was the top scorer overall on board six, with 5½ out of 7.

Norway's Randaberg Sjakklubb also made the trip south but had an even harder time and ended up as 37 out of the 39 teams. Asker finished in 28th place. In the Norwegian duel there was never any doubt about the result on board six. Kyrre Indrebø (1554) was Black.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Kyrre Indrebø**
Panormo 2001

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.b3 e5 8.dxe5 ♘g4 Black wants to recapture on e5 with a piece but the structure that results is as a rule better for White. 8...dxe5 gives a completely different type of position. White cannot take on e5 due to problems on the long dark diagonal. **9.♗a3** 9.♗b2 is more natural, but Magnus has ambitions of breaking with the c-pawn. **9...♘c6 10.♘c3 ♘gxe5 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.♖c1 f4 13.♘d5 g5 14.c5!**

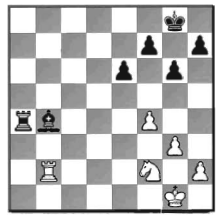
Black has nothing more to use to fuel his attack. White on the other hand is just be-

ginning to build up a decisive initiative in the centre. **14...dxc5 15.♗xc5 ♗d6 16.e3 fxg3 17.hxg3 ♗xc5 18.♖xc5 ♕d6 19.♕c1 g4 20.♖d1 ♖d8 21.♕c3** Black has a hopeless king position. **21...♔f7 22.♖c4 ♕e5** The position was grim in any case. **23.♖xc6! ♕xc3 24.♖xc3 c6 25.♖d4 cxd5 26.♖c7+ ♔g6 27.♗xd5** Black is still caught fast. **27...♗f5 28.♗xb7 ♖xd4 29.♗xa8 ♖d1+ 30.♔g2 ♗d3 31.♖xa7** Just help yourself. **31...♗f1+ 32.♔h2 ♖d2 33.♖a4 ♗h3 34.♖f4! ♖xa2 35.♗g2** and Black resigned as White wins yet another pawn after 35...♗xg2 36.♖xg4+.

By this time Magnus already had a good opening repertoire. His endgame technique still needed some work but in the following game against Shannon Clements he showed his abilities there as well.

□ **Shannon Clements**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Panormo 2001

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♗xf6? White is clearly not an opening specialist. After this Black has no problems. **7...♕xf6 8.♗e2 ♘c6 9.♘f3 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♕d2 b5 12.♘d1 ♗b7 13.c3 ♘e5 14.♘xe5 ♕xe5 15.f3 d5 16.exd5 ♖fd8 17.f4 ♕xd5 18.♕xd5 ♗xd5** Magnus has not managed to exploit White's limp play for more than an endgame advantage. True, the bishop pair will disappear quickly, but the edge lasts thanks to the control of the open d-file and White's misplaced knight on d1. **19.♗f3 ♗xf3 20.♖xf3 ♖d2 21.b4 a5** White cannot get in ♖f3-f2 without losing a pawn. **22.bxa5 ♖xa5 23.♔f1 ♖axa2 24.♖xa2 ♖xa2 25.♖f2 ♖a4 26.g3 g6 27.♖b2 b4 28.cxb4 ♗xb4 29.♘f2**



It is a delight to sit on the black side of such a position and a nightmare for White to defend himself. **29...♗c3 30.♖e2 ♗f6 31.♘d3 h6 32.♔g2 ♔g7 33.♘c5 ♖d4 34.♘e4 ♗e7 35.♔f3** 35.h4 would have been a better try. **35...g5! 36.♔e3 ♖a4 37.♔f3 f5 38.♘f2 ♖a3+ 39.♔g2 ♔f6 40.♘h3 ♖d3 41.fxg5+ hxg5 42.♘xg5** White cannot stand defending passively any longer. **42...♔xg5 43.♖xe6 ♗f6** White only needs to exchange off the last pawn to gain a theoretical draw but Magnus plays accurately and does not give White a chance. **44.♖e2 ♔g4 45.♖c2 ♗c3 46.♖f2 ♖d2** Black needs to exchange rooks to make progress but this requires pinpoint calculation to ensure that the f-pawn survives. **47.h3+ ♔g5 48.♖xd2 ♗xd2 49.♔f3 ♗c1** A fine waiting move that gives Black time to reposition his bishop. 49...♗c3? 50.g4 f4 51.h4 is a draw at once. **50.♔e2 ♗b2 51.♔f2 ♗e5 52.♔f3 ♗d6 53.♔g2 ♔f6** Now Black's king also improves his position. **54.♔f2 ♔e5 55.♔f3 ♗f8!** Another regrouping. **56.♔e3 ♗h6+ 57.♔f3 ♗g5 58.h4** White must finally move pawns, otherwise Black invades with his king. **58...♗h6 59.g4 f4**

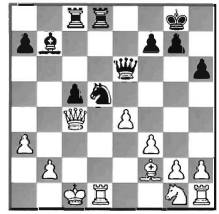
60.g5 ♗g7 61.h5 White's pawns can only go one way – down the drain. **61...♔f5 62.h6 ♗e5** White resigned.

Magnus also became a reliable scorer for Asker SK in the Eastern Norwegian league in the 2001-02 season. Against Glenn Gaasland (1966) from Follo he impressed with a finely judged positional pawn sacrifice.

□ **Glenn Gaasland**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2001

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 b6 7.♗g5 ♗b7 8.f3 d5 9.e3 ♘bd7 10.♗d3 h6 11.♗h4 ♕e8!? An unusual move, but it is logical enough to get out of the pin and occupy the e-file. **12.♗g3 ♖c8 13.c5 bxc5 14.dxc5**

14...d4!? Magnus is, as usual, more concerned with active pieces than material. 14...♗c6 was playable, but why not seize the initiative at once? **15.♕xd4** Black will also break with the e-pawn after 15.exd4 ♘d5, but this may nevertheless hold out better chances for White. **15...e5 16.♕c3 e4 17.c6 exd3 18.♗f2 ♘d5 19.cxd7 ♕xd7 20.♕xd3 ♕e6!** White has kept the extra pawn but his problems remain to be solved. Also, ♗b7-a6 hangs in the air. **21.0-0-0 c5!** A new storm appears on the horizon. **22.♕c4** As we shall see, this is no secure blockade **22...♖fd8** Magnus sets a little trap that White steps right into, but Black is also threatening 23...♗a6 and advancing his c-pawn. **23.e4**



23...♘e3! An elegant mate motif suddenly appears. **24.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25.♕e2 ♕c4+!** and as White cannot avoid 26.♕xc4 ♖d1 mate, he resigned.

Magnus has since developed a wonderful ability to assess such intuitive sacrifices, where one does not get any concrete return for an investment other than perhaps a lasting initiative or active pieces.

Just a week after the team tournament in Crete, Magnus played the cadet board in a four-nations match over ten boards between Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland at Gausdal Høyfjellshotell. Again the Norwegians could feel how much tougher things are at the international level. Sweden and Denmark had especially strong teams. Magnus managed just half a point from three games, but his opposition was very stiff and his opponents were five or six years older than he was. Only against Finland's Tomi Nybäck did Magnus scrape a half point.

Tomi Nybäck is also a major talent. At just 18 he achieved the grandmaster title. He has risen to 2545 on the April 2004 FIDE rating list and is well on the way to establishing himself as a strong grandmaster. But it was hard for father Henrik not to wrinkle his nose a little when an international master recently congratulated Magnus on the GM title, saying that Magnus was the biggest talent he had seen since Tomi Nybäck. Magnus had, after all, a higher rating on the same list and is still five years younger!

The week after Gausdal it was time for a new team championship. This time the journey was not long. The youth wing of Magnus' first club, Bærum Schakselskap, was staging the Norwegian championship for junior teams, and Magnus would play second board for the home side.

In Norwegian chess an artificial barrier exists between 'adult' clubs and youth clubs, which is due to chess' relationship to public funding. Chess is not defined as a sport in Norway and without links to the sports federation the chess federation receives no economic support at all.

The Youth Chess Federation on the other hand receives a certain amount of funding from the Department of Family and Culture since it is a youth organisation. Many local authorities also offer similar support to youth clubs. This is why most chess clubs in Norway have a separate youth section, and kids can be a member of an 'adult' club and a completely different youth club.

In the junior team championship Magnus did well with 4/6, but suffered from the tough schedule: one round on Friday night, three on Saturday and two on Sunday. His father knew that this was much too tough for a little boy, but let him do it. This resulted in, among other things, a major blunder against Tage Nielsen, a player rated around 1500 that Magnus would normally beat rather easily. Bærum had to settle for third place after an exciting finish.

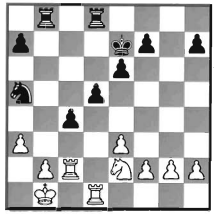
But it didn't take long for Magnus to load his batteries. Less than two weeks later, in the end of October, Magnus and his father returned to beautiful Bad Wiessee and Haus Bildstein, the same guesthouse they and the NTG gang lived in the year before. The Carlsen family were met with open arms by the same friendly owner. Magnus also received a lot of attention from the organisers, who had noticed the large crowds around Magnus' games the previous year. This time he took 5½/9 and achieved a rating performance of 2334.

It was not as entertaining without the NTG band, and they didn't manage to see Garmisch Partenkirchen this time either. But Magnus set a new personal performance rating record in the tournament and could already fight on even terms with strong grandmasters, as here against Giorgi Kacheishvili (2583) from Georgia.

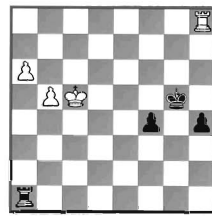
□ **Giorgi Kacheishvili**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Bad Wiessee 2001

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 b6 7.♗g5 ♗b7 8.e3 c5 9.dxc5 bxc5 10.♘e2 10.f3 or 10.♘f3 is more common but White has a venomous idea. **10...♘c6 11.♘g3** White already

has the nasty threat of 12.♘h5, but Magnus knows how to handle this kind of thing. **11...♕a5 12.♗xf6 gxf6 13.♕xa5 ♘xa5 14.♘h5 ♖fd8! 15.0-0-0** After 15.♘xf6+ ♔g7 16.♘h5+ ♔h6 17.♘f4 ♗a6 18.♖c1 ♖ab8 Black has active play for the pawn. White can defend himself with 19.♖c2 and put his king on c1 if Black doubles on the b-file, so it was an interesting possibility. The Georgian GM has more aggressive things in mind but the move chosen in the game is worse. **15...♔f8! 16.♘xf6** Now White must think about damage limitation. **16...♔e7 17.♘h5 ♗a6** The c-pawn is lost. **18.♘f4 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 ♘xc4 20.♖he1 ♖ab8 21.♖e2 d5 22.♖c2 ♘a5 23.♔b1 c4 24.♘e2**



24...♘b7?! With vigilant play Black should be able to advance his centre pawns without allowing counterplay. **25.e4!** Magnus had completely forgotten that this was possible when the c-pawn was no longer protected. **25...♘c5 26.exd5 ♖xd5** Not 26...exd5 27.♘f4. **27.♘c3 ♖g5 28.f4 ♖h5 29.♖d4** After 29.g3 ♘d3 it is not so easy to be rid of the knight on d3 or exploit the pawn weakness on c4. A nice variation that appears to win for Black is 30.♘a4 ♖a5! 31.♖xc4 ♖xa4 32.♖c7+ (not 32.♖xa4? ♘xb2) ♔d8 33.♖c2 ♖xa3! 34.♖cd2 ♖bb3 and White cannot free himself. **29...♖xh2 30.♖xc4 ♘d3 31.♔a2 ♖b7 32.♘e4 ♖d7 33.♘c5 ♘xc5 34.♖xc5** A complicated double rook ending has arisen where White's immediate chances appear best, but Black is not without defensive resources. **34...♔f6 35.♖a5 ♖b7 36.f5? e5?** Two strange pawn moves. 36...exf5 looks fully playable. **37.♖e2 ♖e7 38.♖a6+ ♔g5** The problem was 38...♔xf5 39.g4+ and the rook falls. Now Magnus' position is at crisis point. **39.f6 ♖b7 40.♖xe5+ ♔g6 41.♖e7 ♖b8 42.♖axa7?** After this Black gets plenty of counter-chances. 42.♖e2 followed by advancing the queenside pawns looks like a clear technical win. **42...♖xg2 43.♖ab7 ♖xb7 44.♖xb7 h5!** This pawn is fast. **45.a4 45...♖g4?!** Magnus starts to get sloppy. After 45...h4 anything can happen. **46.♔a3 h4 47.♖b8 ♖g3+** After 47...♔h7 48.♖c8 White can stop the h-pawn from in front. **48.b3 ♔xf6 49.♖h8 ♔g5 50.a5 ♖e3 51.♔a4 ♖e6 52.b4 f5 53.b5 ♖e1 54.a6 ♖a1+ 55.♔b4 f4 56.♔c5**



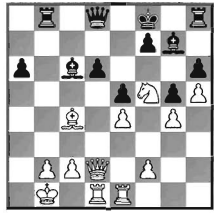
56...f3? As Magnus himself pointed out in analysis long afterwards, the position is still in fact drawn. An illustrative variation is 56...♔g4 57.b6 ♖xa6 58.b7 ♖a5+ 59.♔d4 (else Black can eliminate the b-pawn either from the side or behind after 59.♔b4 ♖b1) 59...♖b5 60.b8♕ ♖xb8

61.♖xb8 h3 62.♖h8 (62.♔e4 h2 63.♖h8 ♔g3 is simpler) ♔g3 63.♔d3 h2 64.♔e2 ♔g2 65.♖g8+ ♔h3 66.♔f2 h1♘+ 67.♔f3 ♘g3 and thanks to the f-pawn Black secures a theoretically drawn position. **57.b6 ♖a5+ 58.♔d4!** Now White comes to the kingside all too easily after winning the rook for the b-pawn. **58...♖xa6 59.b7 ♖b6 60.b8♕ ♖xb8 61.♖xb8 ♔f4 62.♖f8+ ♔g3 63.♔e3** Black resigned.

Against Martin Vaculik (2192) from the Czech Republic Magnus showed that he could expedite master level players with simple positional means.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Martin Vaculik**
Bad Wiessee 2001

1.e4 e6 2.d4 g6 This looks completely demented, but eventually becomes the more familiar 'elephant' set-up. **3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.♘c3 ♘e7 5.♗e3 b6 6.♕d2 h6 7.0-0-0 ♗b7 8.h4 d6 9.♗d3 ♘d7 10.♔b1 a6** Black has made all of his 'elephant' moves. It is not so easy for White to find a concrete way to punish Black's odd play. Magnus decides to centralise his pieces calmly and see how things develop. **11.♖he1 b5 12.a3 ♖c8?** Black should play 12...c5 while he can. **13.d5! e5 14.h5 g5** If the last two moves were necessary then Black's strategy has completely failed. **15.g4!** Black suddenly has no prospects for either of his bishops. The bishop on g7 is particularly bad and the hole on f5 is not going away. **15...c5 16.dxc6 ♖xc6 17.♘h2!** The knight is on its way to f5. **♘b6 18.♗xb6!** This bishop was just in the way. **18...♖xb6 19.♘f1 ♗c6 20.♘e3 b4 21.axb4 ♖xb4 22.♘cd5 ♖b8 23.♘xe7 ♔xe7 24.♘f5+ ♔f8 25.♗c4!**



Black has been completely outplayed. **25...d5 26.♗xd5 ♕b6 27.♕c3** •Black resigned.

Not yet eleven, Magnus was in the process of passing the best junior players in the country, both in playing strength and in rating. So it was perhaps a bit unnecessary to compete in the 12-and-under class at the Norwegian youth championships in Randaberg just outside of Stavanger. Magnus was born late in the year (30 November) and was one of the youngest in this group, but he could just as well have fought for the gold in the 17-25 age group. But Magnus was still tempted by another Nordic gold medal and to get to that championship, which would be held in Denmark early the next year, he would have to finish in the top two in the equivalent class in the Norwegian championship. The federation is strict about protocol, and besides, in the Nordic event one cannot play in classes above one's age. Magnus had crashed to an unexpected loss the year before in the U-10 but this time there was no doubt, he won all seven games easily.

Before year's end Magnus and his father managed to play in a small national

tournament in Modum, which produced the surprising result of father finishing ahead of son. Magnus scored 2/5 and was not quite in form while Henrik had the tournament of his life and finished second with 3½/5, beaten only by Leif Erlend Johannessen, who would shortly become Norway's fifth grandmaster. Even though dad was an able club player rated around 1800, Magnus had long passed him in playing strength. So Henrik could smile with satisfaction when an older Norwegian master came to him and said seriously: 'Well, the father is still stronger.'

4 Mounting chess fever

January-June 2002

'OK, I'll go to bed early tonight.'
– Magnus agreeing to end his day at 12.30 am at a Gausdal tournament.

If the previous autumn had been active, the winter of 2002 would be absolutely hectic. Magnus was now consumed by the game and could not play often enough. His rating was beginning to adjust to his real playing strength. In January 2002 Magnus was ranked number six on the top Norwegian junior list, with a rating of 2148. On the cadet list for those under 16, he was nearly 500 points above the next player. It was clear that something big was brewing.

We were nevertheless lucky to manage to get a sponsor for Magnus. One late, dark afternoon in December Henrik and I had a meeting with the marketing chief at Computas, a successful computer consulting firm in Lysaker, just west of Oslo. People in such positions get hundreds of similar applications, so just getting a meeting with the right person is hard enough. But we were lucky – the marketing boss also had a clever young son and was curious about Magnus. Besides, Computas had been the chief sponsor of the Norwegian championship in Asker in 2000, when the NTG chess department was co-organiser and responsible for marketing, so a connection had already been established.

In chess circles there is often talk about how much one really needs a major sponsor but there are not very many people who do what is needed to attract one. Chess in itself is an excellent product. Many companies want to be associated with it and many use chess motifs in their marketing. There are many exciting aspects to chess – the challenge is to make them saleable.

One of the leaders of the communications company Dinamo once explained that there were three reasons for a firm to sponsor something. External exposure was the most obvious one. Firms are interested in branding and want to be seen and associated with, for example, a sports star who may represent some positive attribute.

But internal exposure is nearly as significant. Many companies feel it is important to make their workplaces attractive, and tickets to matches or events, lectures on how top athletes think and other such offers can have a positive impact.

A third reason can be the desire to have an informal meeting place with other major industry players, for instance during football matches.

Magnus Carlsen's successes have produced a media star, but due to his young age this aspect has been played down in our efforts to find sponsors. Magnus is

undoubtedly a tidbit for the press, but he is also a young boy that needs to be protected. Magnus has been freely able to decline any offers without any thought as to whether it increased or reduced his market value. He has been discussed a lot but seldom interviewed.

So Magnus fronting advertising posters or something similar has never been an option. Firms, too, have moral reservations about this. A meeting place for many sponsors is hardly something that Magnus could offer, either. So our offer to the marketing boss at Computas contained various elements that could stimulate the firm internally.

Magnus was present at the meeting, but in order not to bore him, and because we had plans to praise him profusely, we also had Victor Hansen, NTG's new assistant working off military service, along to play blitz chess with him. Magnus did not need to be present when money was discussed, and the pair of them were quickly ushered away to the other end of the office to play while his father and I tried to sell 'the product'.

Magnus is small and intelligent, like a microchip, so there were plenty of good associations. We could offer monthly reports of Magnus' tournaments that could be distributed to employees and clients and either posted on their web site or their private intranet. Magnus could give simultaneous exhibitions in the company canteen against those who dared to turn up and I could give chess lessons and lectures for Computas staff.

Further, we had had a promise from the news web sites Nettavisen and TV2 Interaktiv, who were about to merge into the largest Norwegian Internet news site, that they would arrange a match between Magnus and 'the rest of the world' on their site. Computas could have their logo and link to all pages where the match was discussed. Furthermore, we could also arrange a 'Computas Easter Festival', with various tournaments in the company's spacious canteen. We had a little package to offer and luckily, made the sale.

We calculated that Magnus and his father had used about NOK 60,000 (slightly over 7,000 Euro) in the previous six months on travel and tournament expenses and that they would likely use the same in the half year to come. That was fine. Computas would cover all expenses for both training and tournaments with this as an approximate guideline.

Out of consideration to both parties, the agreement was limited to six months at a time so that neither side would feel bound against their will. Unfortunately, hard times were ahead for the IT sector, and Computas had to pull out as early as the summer. But the Carlsen family are still extremely grateful to the company. Not only was the support generous, but it also made it easier to explain to their other three children why they invested so much on Magnus' travels.

The first stop on the winter 2002 tour was once again Gausdal Høyfjellshotell. Against all odds, three of the annual chess festivals in this beautiful mountain setting were still on – the Gausdal Troll Masters in January, the Gausdal Classics just after Easter and the Gausdal Chess Festival in August.

Except for the last Gausdal tournament in October 2003, Magnus participated in

all of them after his first appearance there in July 1999. Now, sadly, it looks as if the Gausdal era may come to an end. There are limits to how much time and money an enthusiast can invest. Hans Olav Lahlum deserves praise for having given Magnus and other Norwegian talents so many chances to get international experience.

Magnus was only partly satisfied with his result in the Gausdal Troll Masters just after New Year's. He lost against those rated above him, beat those below him and ended up with 4½ out of 9 and a rating performance of about 2200. There were excellent sporting dividends, though, with plenty of post-game analysis and skiing before the games.

Magnus produced an elegant queen sacrifice against Per Johansson (2041) from Sweden.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Per Johansson**
Gausdal 2002

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♘f6 4.d4 g6 5.♗d3 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘c3 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗xf3 9.♕xf3 dxc4 9...e6 to play 10...♘bd7 and eventually capture on c4 later is more normal. **10.♗xc4 ♘bd7 11.♖d1 e5 12.d5 e4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘b6 15.♗b3 cxd5 16.♗xd5 ♘xd5 17.♖xd5 ♕b6 18.♕d3** Black has some compensation for the pawn, but he must follow up by putting a rook on one of the open files, either to c8 or d8. **18...f5?** This just weakens his king position and allows White to solve his development problems with his next move. **19.♗d2! ♖ad8** 19...♗xb2? 20.♖b1 does not work, and 19...♕xb2 20.♖b1 ♕xa2 21.♖xb7 is not tempting due to the weakness of the seventh rank. **20.♖d1 ♖xd5 21.♕xd5+ ♔h8 22.♗c3 ♕c7** Black should have taken the opportunity to trade bishops and weaken White's pawn structure by playing 22...♗xc3, but his own king position would remain exposed. **23.♖d4!** Various combinational motifs arise. **23...♖c8 24.♕e6 ♖d8** This makes a neat combination possible, but White had a winning position anyway.

25.♕f7! Black's queen is overloaded. **25...♕xf7** Black has nothing better but the coming pawn ending is easily won for White. **26.♖xd8+ ♕g8 27.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 28.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 29.f3 ♔f7 30.♔f2 ♔e6 31.g4 ♔e5 32.gxf5 gxf5 33.♔g3 f4+ 34.♔f2 ♔f5 35.e4+ ♔e5 36.♔e2 ♔d4 37.♔d2 ♔c4 38.b3+ ♔d4 39.a4 h6 40.♔e2** Black must soon concede his blockading square d4. **40...b6 41.♔d2 a6 42.♔e2 b5 43.a5 h5 44.h4 ♔c5 45.♔d3 b4 46.e5! ♔d5 47.e6 ♔xe6 48.♔e4** Black resigned.

Anders Bekker-Jensen, who two years earlier narrowly escaped with a draw against a little unrated boy, now found the same lad rated nearly 500 points above him, which was certainly nothing to laugh about.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Anders Bekker-Jensen**
Gausdal 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘xd4 This is not logical as White is now left with a powerful, unopposed piece in the centre. **6.♕xd4 a6** Black tries to get by without developing his knight to f6. **7.♗g5 ♕a5 8.f4 e5 9.♕d2 f6** This is not a pretty sight, but Black is quite solid and White too has work to do before his development is complete. **10.♗h4 ♗e6 11.f5 ♗f7 12.♗f2 ♘e7 13.b4!** White must do something active to punish Black's dubious set-up. **13...♕c7** 13...♕xb4 14.♖b1 allows White to invade with a dangerous rook on b7. **14.b5 ♘c8 15.♖b1 ♗e7 16.bxa6 bxa6 17.♘d5 ♕c6** After 17...♗xd5 18.♕xd5 Black dies on the light squares. **18.c4 0-0 19.♗d3 ♗d8** Black has averted the worst but the position remains highly favourable for White. Black has little to do. **20.0-0 ♗xd5 21.cxd5 ♕a4 22.♖b7**

22...♘a7? A little joke. After 23.♗xa7 Black has 23...♖xa7 and 24.♗b6+, but Magnus is not fooled. **23.♖xa7** 1-0

Magnus was far more satisfied with third place in the Open Norwegian quick-play championship in Fredrikstad afterwards. Although he lost to me and grandmaster Vadim Milov, a native Russian who now represents Switzerland, he beat former Norwegian champions Per Ofstad and Erling Kristiansen and swept players rated around 2100 off the board. 6½ points out of 10 games and bronze position in a national, adult, championship – this was something to trumpet in the first monthly report to Computas!

With the travel budget assured by Computas, all the Carlsens had to do was search the Internet for exciting tournaments. Their choice fell on the Open Marianske Lazne in the Czech Republic, an old spa town and former holiday spot for the Russian tsars. The surroundings were gorgeous and the stay inexpensive. But best of all it fit in well with Henrik's work schedule to have an outing as January ended.

The tournament was not overly strong and Magnus was seeded number 20 in the field of 66 players, but he made it clear that he intended to fight at the top of the table. After a loss to eventual winner Jan Turner (2340) from the Czech Republic, Magnus had to settle for 6 out of 9 and a share of fourth place, his rating performance about 2350.

There was much instructive analysis after the games here as well. A few Italians and Spaniards had not caught on to who Magnus was and were startled when the small, eleven-year-old boy began to interrupt their post-game investigations in brave English, his little arm stretching across the board. They quickly understood that this lad's skill outshone theirs, and smiled and were friendly the rest of the evening.

In the Czech Republic there are often several tournaments in succession. Many of the players from Marianske Lazne moved directly on to Prague for the Pragonet Open. Magnus and his father also went on to Prague, but not to play chess. Magnus was on the verge of tears but they had only a few days before they had to return, and had to limit their visit to a tour of some of the magnificent city's famous landmarks.

Magnus has gradually built up a certain scepticism towards 'cultural experiences', but in Prague he escaped with just some of the main streets and some grand palaces. Besides, he got some pizza, so everything was fine.

Less than two weeks later, in the middle of February, Magnus was on his way to the Nordic youth championships in Tjele boarding school in Denmark, this time with his grandfather as chaperone and part of a considerable Norwegian delegation.

Anything but gold would have been a defeat in the U-12 class. Magnus was rated nearly 500 points ahead of his nearest competitors, but after blundering away two pawns in the penultimate round against Erik Blomqvist (1634) from Sweden, Magnus made the event exciting as Blomqvist caught up with him. But the Swede only managed a draw in the final round while Magnus won, so in spite of this little hiccup everything ended according to plan.

Magnus had read in a book that the record for the Nordic championship was five consecutive titles. This generated ambitions but eventually these tournaments were overshadowed by their European and world equivalents. So far Magnus has had to be content with two Nordic titles. If he wants more they will have to be the top adult title, the era of Nordic youth events seems to be over.

With Magnus' busy tournament schedule our ability to meet was still very limited, but the training sessions we had were good. We were joined by Leif Erlend Johannessen, who was ten years older than Magnus and had been an NTG student a few years before, and occasionally by Carl Fredrik Ekeberg, who was six years older than Magnus and playing at about the same level. Sometimes, I worked alone with Magnus.

Normally we worked about three hours at a time. When everyone met up, we tended to sit at the board and not get much more done than examine one game from each player, but alone with Magnus we breezed through his latest games on the computer at a much higher tempo. The work was not very profound, but we got to analyse and discuss a lot.

When Leif Erlend went out and took two grandmaster norms at the beginning of the year and a bit later the third, becoming Norway's fifth GM, it only added to the positive wave that we felt we were surfing.

After such training and analysis sessions at quite a high level, I had to stop and pinch myself increasingly often. Am I really sitting here with a boy of eleven and discussing the equivalent of university level material? You could already feel the presence of something completely exceptional. Eventually we got used to it. There was no longer any doubt about whether Magnus would become a grandmaster, it was just a question of when.

In our March report we began: 'We hardly bat an eye any more, but an eleven-year-

old boy going out and capturing second place in the Open Norwegian Junior championship is, in fact, sensational.' The result of this championship, which took place in Computas' premises, was solid but it was not exactly a bombshell.

Magnus scored as many points (5½/7) as top-seeded Craig Hanley from England but Hanley's opponents had performed better than Magnus' and the Englishman took the title on tie-break.

Not everyone had noticed how strong Magnus was. Heather Richards (2209) from England, who was Hanley's girlfriend, was clearly dissatisfied when she lost to Magnus in the last round, exclaiming: 'I lost to that little prick!'

Magnus began the event hesitantly, which he still does on occasion, creating speculation that he is a 'slow starter'. Against Jørund Berstad (1553) in the first round of the Computas festival Magnus had to sacrifice three pawns before he finally got his pieces going.

□ **Jørund Berstad**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗f4 e5 8.♗g5 a6 9.♘a3 b5 10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.♘d5 ♗g7 12.c3 0-0 Magnus is not completely alert. 12...f5 is standard. **13.♕h5** Suddenly it is not so easy to carry out the thematic break with the f-pawn, and it becomes even harder after Black's next move. With 13...♗e6 it would still be possible to repair things. **13...♘e7?!** **14.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 15.♘c2 ♗b7** Black has to sacrifice something to get some freedom, and the time seems to be now, with either 15...d5 or 15...f5. But Magnus has seen another way to sacrifice a pawn. **16.♗d3**

16...f5! Emergency measures – Black cannot sit idly by and watch a knight land on f5. **17.♕xf5 ♗c8 18.♕h5 f5** Finally Magnus is back in the game with some active play. **19.♘e3 f4 20.♘d5 ♕b7 21.♕h4** The knight check on e7 is not so dangerous. With calm play White should be able to secure a clear advantage. **21...♗e6 22.♘e7+ ♔f7 23.♘f5 ♗xf5 24.exf5 ♔g8** Suddenly Black has everything in order with a mobile pawn centre and a potentially powerful dark-squared bishop. **25.♗c2 ♗f6 26.♕h3 ♔h8** 26...d5 at once was also possible. **27.0-0-0** White's king may be safer on the kingside. **27...d5 28.♕f3 e4** Black cannot maintain protection of d5 but pawns count less now than opening lines against the white king. **29.♕xf4 b4 30.cxb4 ♕g7** The white king turns out to be an elusive target. After this White can force the trade of queens. **31.♕g3 ♗xb2+ 32.♔b1 ♕f6?** After 32...♖xf5 a draw is the likely result but Magnus wants to attack and has not calculated variations accurately. **33.♖xd5 ♖ac8**

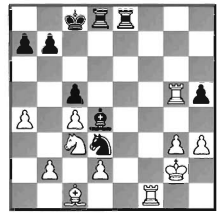
34.♖d6 ♕g7 Magnus has to accept the trade of queens, with a three pawn deficit. Now he really wakes up and manages to generate real counterplay. **35.♕xg7+ ♗xg7 36.♗xe4 ♖c4 37.f3 ♖xb4+ 38.♔c1 ♖c8+ 39.♔d1** White's king is living dangerously.

39...♗e5! The bishop comes to f4 with decisive effect. **40.♖d5 ♗f4 41.♖e1 ♖b2!** Mate is inevitable and therefore White resigned.

Magnus played the rest of the tournament like a rock. Against Brede Kvisvik (2060), who was an NTG student the year before, he also sacrificed material early but the outcome of the game was never in doubt.

□ **Brede Kvisvik**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2002

1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 ♘f6 Once again we can see that Magnus' short career is distinguished by a fearless readiness to offer material for activity. **4.♗b5+ ♗d7 5.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 6.c4 e6 7.♕e2 ♗e7** 7...♗d6 is more common, followed by recapturing on e6 with the pawn. **8.dxe6 ♕xe6** Also here 8...fxe6 was natural, but Magnus doesn't fear an ending a pawn down. **9.♕xe6 fxe6 10.♘f3 ♘c6 11.0-0 0-0-0 12.a4** This does not look good. White has hopes of activating his rook via the third rank, but his position only sprouts more holes. 12.♘g5 is answered by 12...♘d4, which both covers e6 and threatens c2. The simple developing move 12.♘c3 was natural. **12...♖hf8 13.♖a3 ♗d6 14.g3 e5!** Exchanging pieces is often favourable for the player with material superiority but here giving life to Black's few but powerful pieces is vital. **15.fxe5 ♘xe5 16.♘xe5 ♗xe5 17.♖af3 ♗d4+ 18.♔g2 ♖fe8!** Black already has concrete threats. **19.♘c3 ♘g4!** Black elegantly invades the white position. **20.♖f7 h5 21.h3 ♘e5 22.♖xg7 ♘d3 23.♖g5**



23...♖e1! The unfortunate bishop on c1 is devoured on its starting square. **24.♖xh5** White also loses material after 24.♖xe1 ♘xe1 25.♔f1 ♘d3 26.♘a2 (26.♘e2 ♖f8+) ♖e8!. **24...♖xf1 25.♔xf1 ♖f8+ 26.♔e2 ♘xc1+ 27.♔d1 ♘d3 28.♔c2 ♘b4+ 29.♔b3** The king is on the way to the gallows. **29...♖f2 30.a5 ♖xd2 31.♘b5** White could have put up more of a fight but the result cannot be changed. **31...♖xb2+ 32.♔a4 ♘c2! 33.a6 ♖b4+ 34.♔a5 b6** Mate.

During the winter Magnus also played some brilliant games for Asker SK in Østlandsserien, the region's top league. This queen sacrifice against Tor Guldbrandsen (1990) from Nordstrand SK was both original and effective.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Tor Guldbrandsen**
Oslo 2002

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.♘gf3 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♗d3 ♕b6 8.0-0 cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘xd4 10.♘xd4 ♕xd4 11.♘f3 ♕b6 12.♕a4 White chooses a variation where he gets active play for a pawn. Black is reasonably well acquainted with the opening but Magnus manages to seize the initiative nonetheless. **12...♕b4 13.♕c2 ♕c5 14.♕e2 ♗e7 15.♗e3 ♕a5 16.♗g5!?** A new idea. White usually plays on the queenside here, putting a rook on the c-file and advancing with a2-a3 or b2-b4, but Magnus has his sights set on the kingside. **16...♕d8** After 16...♗xg5 17.♘xg5 h6 neither 18.♕h5 nor 18.♘xe6 look quite right but White can maintain pressure with 18.♘h3 followed by ♘f4 and then perhaps to h5 with the knight. **17.♕e3 ♗xg5?** White also has compensation after 17...0-0 but Black is still fighting. **18.♘xg5 ♕e7** After 18...h6 19.♘xe6! fxe6 20.♗g6+ ♔e7 21.♕f4 White's queen threatens evil things in three different directions. **19.♖ac1!** Black may have hoped to trap the bishop after 19.♘xh7 ♖xh7 20.♗xh7 g6, but with the weight of Black's defensive resources on the kingside opportunities have opened up on the other side of the board. **19...h6** Black remains blissfully unaware of what is about to happen. 19...♘b6 was necessary, but White can then take on h7 when there is no trap without the resource ♘d7-f8.

20.♕xa7! Magnus often wins his games in grand style. This is neither his first nor his last queen sacrifice. **20...♖b8** Black tries to limit the damage but White gets a decisive material plus. **21.♕xb8 ♘xb8 22.♖xc8+ ♔d7 23.♖xh8 ♘c6 24.♘f3 f6 25.♗b5** Black is finished. **25...fxe5 26.♗xc6+ bxc6 27.♘xe5+ ♔d6 28.♖e1 ♔c7 29.g3 ♕b4 30.♖e2 d4 31.♖d8 ♕b5 32.♖d7+ ♔c8 33.♖e4** The mate patrol arrives. **33...c5 34.♖f4 ♕xd7 35.♘xd7 ♔xd7** Black resigned.

Magnus also beat reigning Norwegian Junior champion Martin Østtveit (2121) rather smoothly.

□ **Martin Østtveit**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2002

1.c4 c5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.a3 e6 6.d3 Julian Hodgson won a lovely game against Boris Gulko with 6.b4 ♘xb4! 7.axb4 cxb4 8.♘b5 ♗xa1 9.♕a4 in Groningen 1994, but it takes guts to invest so much material. **6...♘ge7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.cxd5** This makes life easier for

Black. A better plan is 9.♗d2 followed by ♖b1 and b2-b4. **9...exd5 10.♗f4** The bishop is better on d2. **10...d4 11.♘a4 b6 12.♖c1 ♘d5 13.b4 ♖e8** Magnus sets a little trap. **14.bxc5?** Østtveit has completely overlooked Black's next move.

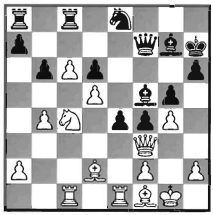
14...b5! Technically ending the game. **15.♘g5** 15.♘b2 ♘c3 is also hopeless. **15...bxa4 16.♕xa4 ♗b7 17.♕b5 ♘xf4!** White can struggle a little, but in vain. **18.♕xb7 ♘xe2+ 19.♔h1 ♕xg5 20.f4 ♕e7 21.♗xc6 ♕xb7 22.♗xb7 ♖ab8 23.c6** This pawn represents White's only hope, but Magnus keeps it under control. **23...♘xc1 24.♖xc1 ♗f8 25.♗a6 ♗xa3 26.♖c4 ♖b6** 26...♖b2 might be more accurate, but White had no doubt about how hopeless his position was and resigned.

Just after Easter it was time for yet another Gausdal tournament. Hans Olav Lahlum had again managed to fill three 10-man groups of varying class. The problem was familiar from the year before: should Magnus be allowed to face opposition that was really a few sizes too big for him? In 2001, Magnus started with one meagre draw in the first five rounds before managing an honourable finish with four final draws. The rating average in the middle group was 2299 this time, while the highest group weighed in at 2412. Magnus' official FIDE rating on the January list was 2163 so he should have had his hands full in either event. Lahlum decided to adhere to the principle of toughest opposition = best education and set Magnus loose in the top group. Things started well with a fine attacking victory over Stig Tjomsland (2274).

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Stig Tjomsland**
Gausdal 2002

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 ♘a6 7.0-0 e5 8.♖e1 ♕e8 9.♗f1 c6 Black could try the surprising 9...♗g4 when 10.d5 ♘b4!? allows him to tidy up on the queenside. Here White must play 11.♗e2 to avoid a doubled pawn on the f-file or allowing the knight into c2, whereupon Black has time to insert 11...a5, with a normal position. **10.d5 ♕e7 11.♖b1** Now the knight on a6 is suffering. **11...♗d7 12.b4 cxd5 13.♘xd5** I remember that my immediate reaction when we were analysing this game was that White should recapture with the c-pawn, but maybe Magnus is right. The pawn majority on the queenside has come a long way, but if White is going to take with the e-pawn, it is perhaps more logical to do so at once, that is, 13.exd5. Black is cramped and is the one who should be happy with piece exchanges. **13...♘xd5 14.exd5** After 14.♕xd5 ♗e6 Black has no problems. **14...♘c7 15.♗e3 ♖fc8 16.c5 ♘e8 17.♕b3 h6 18.♖bc1 ♔h7 19.♘d2 f5 20.♘c4 ♕f6 21.♘a5 f4** Necessary to prevent queenside collapse, but now the e4-square is weakened. **22.♗d2 b6 23.c6 ♗f5 24.♘c4 ♕f7** Black has defended him-

self well. White's progress has halted and the d-pawn is exposed. **25.♕f3 g5 26.g4!** After 26.♗d3 g4 Black has a clammy handful of pawns on the kingside. **26...e4** 26...fxg3 would give White a post on e3 for his knight and after 26...♗g6 27.♗d3 White has a firm grip on the light squares.



27.♖xe4! Necessary, but consistent with Magnus' style nonetheless. The protected, advanced d-pawn will provide long-term compensation for the sacrificed exchange. **27...♗xe4 28.♕xe4+ ♔g8 29.♗d3 b5 30.♘a3 a6 31.♕f3 ♘c7** From here the knight controls the c-pawn, pressures the d-pawn and guards the e6-square from future invasion. **32.♗e4 ♖e8 33.♕d3 ♖e5 34.♗c3 ♖e7 35.♘b1** White's knight has done a good job on c3 and so it sets off for a new career. Black also threatened to capture on c3 and then go after the d-pawn with ♖e5. **35...f3!?** Black desperately seeks active play, but this is very risky. **36.♖e1 ♗xc3 37.♘xc3 ♕f4 38.h3 ♖f8?!** 38...h5 is more dangerous but White can defend with 39.gxh5 g4 and now 40.♔h1 or 40.♕e3. **39.♖e3 h5 40.♖xf3 ♕c1+ 41.♔g2 hxg4 42.♗h7+!** 42.hxg4 surely yields an advantage, but Magnus has calculated deeply. **42...♖xh7 43.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 44.♕xh7 ♕xc3 45.♕f5+ ♔e7** Black needs to return here in order to defend against a queen check with ♘c7-e8, but now the d-pawn falls with check. **46.♕d7+ ♔f8 47.♕xd6+ ♔e8 48.♕d7+ ♔f8 49.♕f5+ ♔e7 50.d6+!** A nice concluding point that Magnus must have seen long in advance. After 50...♔xd6 51.♕d7+ ♔e5 52.♕g7+ White wins the queen. Black resigned.

But the four zeroes that followed in the next four rounds were not so much fun. Against the tournament winner, grandmaster Kaido Kulaots (2531) from Estonia, Magnus only lasted 17 moves.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Kaido Kulaots
Gausdal 2002

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.c4 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e4 ♗b4 As we noted in our preparations for Magnus' match against Levon Aronian in the FIDE world championship in Libya two years later, it is not easy for White to get an advantage against this variation. Aronian also has this variation in his repertoire, but Magnus chose to avoid it. **6.♗g5 c5 7.♗xc4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕a5 9.♗b5+** 9.♗xf6 is the other main variation, with the point being 9...♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♕xc3 11.♔f1 and if 11...♕xc4 12.♔g1 is now good for White since he threatens 13.♖c1 and on to c8. Black should first play 11...gxf6 with unclear play. **9...♗d7 10.♗d2?** If White was going to withdraw the bishop he should have done it the move before. After 10.♗xf6 a load of opening theory exists. **10...♗xb5 11.♘dxb5 ♘xe4 12.♕g4** Magnus has the gift of intuitive sacrifices, but he also has a tendency to be a bit too approximate in his assessments. If he had calculated a bit

deeper he would have seen that Black has nothing to fear here. **12...♘xd2 13.♕xg7 ♖f8 14.0-0-0** This is what Magnus was counting on, but Black defends easily. But 14.♔xd2 ♕xb5 didn't work either.

14...a6! 15.♕e5 axb5 16.♘d5 ♘d7! Kills any threats. **17.♕g5 ♖c8+** White resigned.

The likeable Estonian gained many Norwegian admirers after several fantastic results at Gausdal. In the final, October 2003 edition, he started with a formidable 8½/9 before calming down with two closing draws.

Kulaots is also a friend of the Carlsens. During the Gausdal tournament in January 2000 he and the Carlsens shared a cabin and on the way back to Estonia he spent a night in their Lommedalen home. He borrowed the room of the eldest Carlsen daughter, and the family jokes that he was the first grandmaster in Ellen's bed. Now a grandmaster lives in the room next door, but that is just little brother.

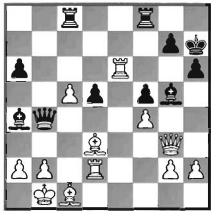
Magnus managed to recover with a win in the sixth round against Pål Røyset (2286) from Tromsø, then lost two more games before finishing with a draw against strong Stelios Halkias (2566) from Greece. Magnus actually picked up rating points from the event, but at the cost of taking some beatings.

If we had been better organised, we could perhaps have prepared Magnus more for the event. Since it was an invitational tournament, we knew who he would face in advance, but we didn't manage more than a few hurried, last-minute sessions. Against Vasilios Kotronias (2568) from Cyprus in the second round Magnus got some use out of our preparation. He emerged healthy from the opening but in time pressure he squandered his position and lost.

□ **Vasilios Kotronias**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Gausdal 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 h6 9.♘xc6 A modern move. We had spent a lot of time on 9.♗f4 and 9.♗e3: **9...bxc6 10.♗f4 d5 11.♕e3 ♗e7 12.♗e2 ♕a5** Black has a nice centre and should have nothing to fear. **13.exd5 ♘xd5** 13...cxd5 was also relevant. **14.♘xd5 cxd5 15.♗e5 0-0 16.♔b1 ♗d7** There were other options, but Magnus wants to put the bishop on b5. **17.♕g3 f6 18.♗f4 ♔h7 19.c4** A natural, but also committal move. White's king cover is depleted by this move. **19...♗c6 20.♗d3+ f5** The pawn structure means nothing now. It is more important for Black to get the f6-square for his bishop. **21.♖he1 ♗f6 22.c5?!** Perhaps Kotronias didn't like 22.♖xe6 dxc4, but now things get very dangerous around the white king. **22...♕b4 23.♗c1 ♗a4** After

23...♖ab8 White has serious problems. 24.♖d2 is strongly met by 24...♗c3 and after 24.♖e2 ♗a4 White must hide his rook somewhere on the kingside. **24.♖d2 ♖ac8** Now 24...♗c3 fails to 25.♗xf5+ and ♕xc3. **25.♖xe6 ♗g5 26.f4**



26...♕xf4? After 26...♕xc5 27.♖e1 ♗d8 Black is still fine. After the move in the game Kotronias manages to wriggle his way into a clearly better endgame. **27.♕xf4 ♗xf4 28.♖f2 ♗xc1 29.♖xf5! ♖xf5** Also after 29...♗b5 30.♗xb5 ♖xf5 31.♗d3 g6 32.♖e7+.♔g8 33.♗xf5 gxf5 34.♔xc1 ♖xc5+ 35.♔d2 White should win. **30.♗xf5+ ♔g8 31.♖xa6!** An important point. **31...♖xc5 32.♖xa4 ♗g5 33.b4!** Black can't manage to create counterplay. **33...♖c1+ 34.♔b2 ♖e1 35.♗g6 ♖e2+ 36.♔c3** Black can prevent mate but he cannot stop the queenside pawns from rolling in. Black resigned.

Probably the playing schedule was just a bit too physically demanding. The Gausdal tournaments are hard. The first game usually starts at 7.30 in the evening so that people can have the afternoon to travel up. This means that the game can last until about 2.30 am, which is tiring for everyone but probably more so for an eleven year old boy. True, Magnus was observed in good spirits well past midnight, ready to demonstrate his win from the first round with the introductory remark: 'It really isn't very late.' But his father didn't agree and after the briefest of looks at the game Magnus gave in, saying 'OK, I'll go to bed early tonight.'

Gausdal also has a double-round day, which is even more tiring. This time Magnus actually won the second game of the day, but he was still obviously worn out by the end.

In the penultimate round he was, to quote the tournament's web page, 'tearfully close to beating his first IM'. Mark Bluvshtein (2354) from Canada is only 2½ years older than Magnus, and had already succeeded in becoming an international master. In his duel with Norway's child star the Canadian IM was a hair's breadth from defeat, but after first bungling the win Magnus blundered terribly to give away the whole point.

This must have hurt, not only Magnus, but also organiser Lahlum, who had decided to slip him to the wolves. But the sporting dividends were excellent, and we got much interesting material to analyse afterwards. Just being able to soak in the atmosphere at such an event, watch the games and analyse, is very instructive. The final result of 2½ out of 9 was a rating performance of 2273 and over Magnus' expected score.

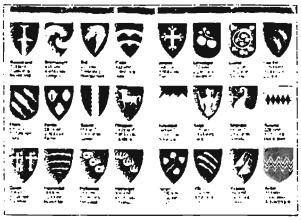
Magnus was still a relatively undiscovered treasure for the general public. The local newspaper, *Asker og Bærum Budstikke*, had interviewed him, something which embarrassed him. Some of the kids at school

Little Magnus gets going. Here he is 9 months...

... and here he is one and a half years old.

Three-year-old Magnus after dinner.

When he was five he found chess unappealing, but at Lego he soon played in higher age categories.



A page from Magnus' famous 'fact book'. At five he knew by heart the area, population, flag and capital of all the countries in the world. After this he began a similar project with all of Norway's municipalities.

At the U-10 Norwegian championship in Porsgrunn in the autumn of 2000, Magnus already was head and shoulders above his rivals and the winners in the other age groups. Left to right: Ørnulf Stubberud, Kjetil A.Lie, Magnus, Magne Sagafos and Øystein Edvardsen.

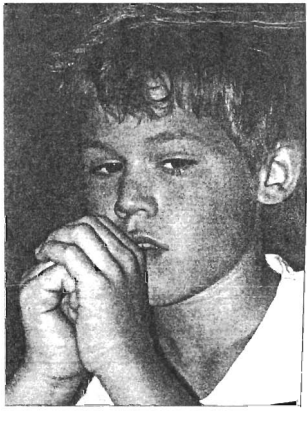
And there were always tournaments in Gausdal, like here in January 2003. Next to Magnus sits Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen, his first trainer. On the far left is Torstein Bae, current president of the Norwegian Chess Federation.

At the U-12 Youth world championship in Crete at the end of 2002, Magnus had to content himself with the silver medal. Next to him stands the champion, Ian Nepomniachtchi from Russia.

On the road with the entire Carlsen family. After his win over Karpov and his draw against Kasparov in Reykjavik there was good reason to pose happily for a group portrait. Left to right: father Henrik, Ingrid, Magnus, Ellen, Signe and mother Sigrun.

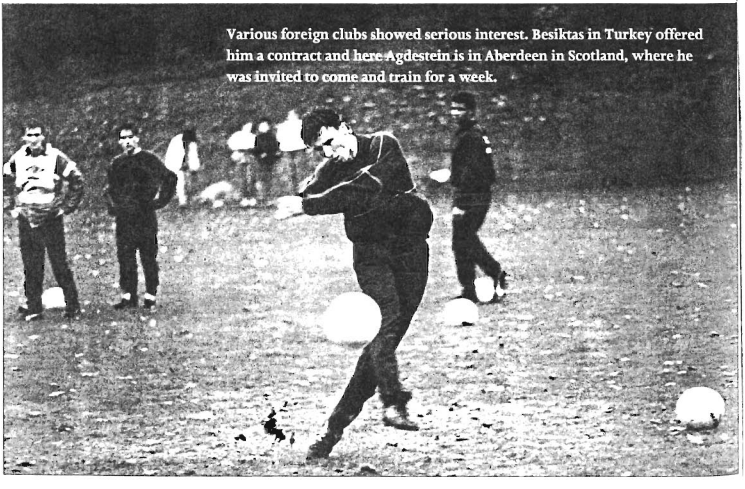
In August 2003 they visited Salzburg, the birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Travelling can also be tough. After the European Youth championships in Budva, in September 2003, Magnus was hit by a nasty stomach virus. Looking thin and tousled he played his first games for Asker SK at the European Club Cup in Crete.



Simen Agdestein the football player. Tired but satisfied, he sits rethinking his debut on the Norwegian U-21 team. His excellent play against Scotland did not go unnoticed and he was soon asked to play for the Norwegian national team.

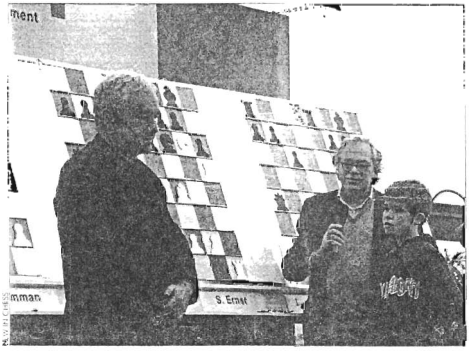
Agdestein has scored for Lyn FC. On the left Lars Bohinen, who would later play for various clubs in England, comes running to join in the celebration.



Various foreign clubs showed serious interest. Besiktas in Turkey offered him a contract and here Agdestein is in Aberdeen in Scotland, where he was invited to come and train for a week.

At the Corus tournament in Wijk aan Zee, Magnus' race for the grandmaster title suddenly picked up speed. In the first round he drew a long game against the 14-year-old Ukrainian phenomenon Kateryna Lahno, but then one sweeping victory followed the other.

The start of the decisive game. The grandmaster norm has been secured. Now the first prize in the Corus C-Group is at stake. Magnus' spectacular win over Sipke Ernst from Holland would turn heads around the world.



Grandmasters Genna Sosonko and Hans Ree tell Magnus that neither they nor anyone in the audience had spotted his beautiful final combination against Ernst. Magnus patiently demonstrated the variations he had seen.

Chess and physical exercise are an essential and natural combination for Magnus. Every day before the round in Wijk aan Zee he would play football with his father.

Only two weeks after Wijk aan Zee Magnus sits fully concentrated at the board again, this time in the Aeroflot Open in Moscow, successfully fighting for his second grandmaster norm.

In the VIP-room of the Aeroflot tournament Magnus was introduced to Vasily Smyslov. Magnus was not really impressed with the opera CD the former world champion gave him, but the gift of signed best games collections delighted him.

After only a few rounds in Moscow there was another outbreak of 'Magnus fever'. While Evgeny Shaposhnikov signs his score-sheet after a devastating defeat, Magnus begins to put the pieces in the initial position again.

started to call him 'the chess genius'. Any coverage in more national media hadn't caused any trouble since his school friends at Lommedalen Children's School didn't seem to follow this.

This did mean that we were a bit uncertain when we began the Internet match at Nettavisen's web site, where Magnus was to play against 'the rest of the world'. How would Magnus tackle this kind of exposure? One way to help was to shield Magnus, so I did the talking. One of the things I said, to Digi.no, a leading IT site, was: 'We have no tradition of child stars in this country, but he will have to get accustomed to the pressure.'

The idea of Magnus growing tired of chess was unthinkable. Egil 'Drillo' Olsen once said, while he was Norway's national football coach, that there are three kinds of people – those that don't play cards, those that play cards, and those that play Cards with a capital C. He is a real Card player and rated only midfield general Kjetil Rekdal as a similar spirit on the Norwegian team.

The same parallel can be made about chess. Magnus was a Chess player with a capital C the first time I met him and he is even more obsessed now. Real chess players think about chess more or less 24 hours a day. It is a passion and a fate that one has to live with – and it lasts a lifetime.

Nevertheless, we were still unsure about how Magnus would handle having such a commotion around him. We decided to keep it low key and let him concentrate on just the game. The fuss has grown and grown around Magnus but so far it has gone well, and he is still the same cheerful boy. Maybe it is easier to learn how to handle the attention while young. One thing is certain, the media circus will continue in the future and his ability to tackle it will form a part of his playing strength – so training to handle it now will be very useful later.

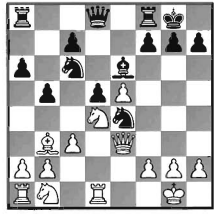
The rest of the world match was part of the sponsorship package with Computas, but it took some time to get it arranged. The technicians at Nettavisen, where the match would be played, fumbled with the task of trying to make chess diagrams for the web pages and other details needed to transmit the game on the Internet. On our side, we at NTG were not sure how to handle the world's voting on moves.

The concept for the match was a Kasparov game against the global Internet public. The Magnus game was played with one move per working day. I would suggest plausible alternatives and make short commentaries on the moves I suggested, and then it was up to the majority vote to decide the world's next move. Magnus learned which move had been made by the afternoon and would have to produce a reply by the next morning.

Norwegians made up most of the voting audience for the game but the traffic was staggering, with about 1,000 votes per move on average and a total of over 250,000 hits on the web page. One would have thought that a democratic cooperation on that scale would lead to far too many cooks, but a lively discussion panel evolved with detailed analysis and commentary, and the leading voices there managed to steer the masses in the right direction.

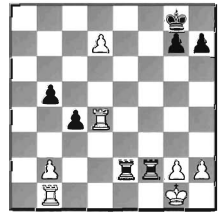
Magnus did not take the game quite so seriously. As a rule he made his reply as

9.d3 ♘f6 Here the Internet team had a very exciting possibility in 9...♗xf2+. Black gets enough material after both 10.♖xf2 ♘xf2 and 10.♔h1 ♘g3+ 11.hxg3 ♗xg3. **10.d4 ♗b6** After 10.d4 the 'net team could have lost at once with 10...♗e7. A commentary page noted the following more or less forced variation: 11.dxe5 ♘e4 12.♖d1 ♗e6 13.c4! bxc4 14.♗a4! and Black can resign. But our team is no pushover – democracy elected 10...♗b6, and Black is fine. **11.dxe5** Played after five seconds thought. Magnus used no book, database or computer, if anyone was wondering. 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♕xe5+ ♗e6 is harmless for Black. White has too many pieces at home and 13.f4 0-0 14.f5 ♗c8 is hardly frightening. **11...♘e4** I have to say that I was fond of 11...♘g8 too, even if that move attracted the fewest votes. But 11...♘e4 was clearly the most natural move. 11...♘g4 was also interesting. I don't think I would have feared 12.h3 ♘h6 13.♗xh6 gxh6 much. The pawn structure is obviously not pretty but Black can get a dangerous attack using the g-file. **12.♗e3** Magnus had clearly expected the 'net team's response and could reply without thought. **12...♗xe3** The 'net team chooses the most solid alternative. Strangely enough 12...♗g4 was the runner-up in the voting, but after 13.♗xb6 cxb6 14.♖d1 it looks like the bishop must retreat to e6 since both 14...♘e7? 15.♗xd5 and 14...♗xf3 15. ♕xf3 ♘xe5 16.♕e2 are just bad for Black. The main alternative to 12...♗xe3 was 12...♘c5 with a complicated position. **13.♕xe3 0-0** The most natural and maybe also the best move, but several of the proposed options were fully playable. **14.♖d1 ♗e6** 14...♘e7 would have cost a pawn after 15.♗xd5 ♘xd5 16.♕xe4, but Black turns out to have a certain amount of compensation after 16...♗b7, though hardly enough. White should probably follow up with 17.♖d2! to prevent diverse tactical threats and at the same time maintain the pin and pressure on d5. A possibly important variation is 17...f5 18.exf6 e.p. ♖xf6 19.♘a3 ♖d6 20.♖ad1 and White has full control. **15.♘d4**



15...♘xe5 This seems to lose a piece, and Magnus was under this impression as well. A very brave decision by the 'net team and now the question is: who has seen farthest? **16.f3 ♘c4** The world team plays incredibly well and nimbly sidesteps the pitfalls. 16...♕g5 looked interesting but would probably lose at once. After 17.♕xg5 ♘xg5 18.f4 Black has 18...♗g4 intending 19.♖f1 c5 and White has trouble finding a decent knight retreat since 20.♘c2 is met by 20...c4. But the simplest way to meet 16...♕g5 is 17.♖e1! and Black cannot avoid losing a piece. **17.♗xc4 dxc4 18.fxe4** After 18.♕xe4 c5 19.♘a3 cxd4 20.♖xd4 (but not 20.cxd4 ♗d5! and Black is clearly better) White may have a tiny advantage, but no more. 18.♕e1 is interesting but after the forced 18...♘d6 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.♕xe6+ ♔h8 21.♘d2 Black has the shot 21...♕g5! and it is sud-

denly Black that holds the reins. (After the natural 21...♖e8 White is better after 22.♕d5!) 18.♘a3 never crossed Magnus' mind. After 18...♘d6 19.♘xe6 Black has 19...♕e7 and if 20.♖e1 ♖fe8 he wins a pawn. **18...c5 19.♘d2 cxd4 20.cxd4 ♕b6** Oddly enough this was not among the seven(!) suggestions I originally offered, but after the 'net team notified us of the possibility we of course made it an option. The move is both natural and good. Black gets fine pressure against White's centre pawns. **21.♘f1** The most logical move, mobilising the d-pawn. **21...♖ae8!** The world team continues to play at a high level. If White gets a few moves to stabilise his centre then he will likely have an advantage. **22.d5** An interesting alternative was 22.♕f4 intending 22...f5 23.e5 and even if the central pawns are blockaded they will be a constant threat of advance. **22...♕xe3+ 23.♘xe3 ♗d7 24.♖d4 ♖e5** After 24...f5 there were variations that appeared to force a draw. Now some life is kept in the position and both sides still have their chances. **25.a4** The possibility of 25.d6 was deeply dissected in the discussion forum. One variation that arose: 25...♖fe8 26.♘d5 ♖xe4 27.♖xe4 ♖xe4 28.♘b6 ♗g4 29.h3 ♖e6 (hoping to trap the knight or grab some pawns after 30.hxg4 ♖xd6) 30.a4! ♖xd6 31.axb5 ♖xb6 32.bxa6 ♖b8 33.a7 ♖a8 34.hxg4 and White wins the rook ending. A fine variation but after 25.d6 Black can perhaps calmly play 25...♖d8 and then f7-f6 followed by centralising his king. So I think that Magnus' choice was the simplest. **25...f5** 25...♖fe8 26.axb5 is a bit better for White as 26...axb5 27.♖a7! is uncomfortable but Black can perhaps hold the position after 26...♗xb5 27.♘xc4 ♖xe4 28.♖xe4 ♖xe4 29.♘d6 ♖b4! (better than 29...♖a4 30.♖c1! and White is very active). **26.♘xf5** After 26.axb5 axb5 27.♖a7 Black has the very interesting possibility 27...f4, though this could well be better for White. Magnus chooses a simpler path, possibly a wise strategy since at this time he was playing in the closing rounds of a tournament in Gothenburg and needed 2/3 to make his first international master result. **26...♗xf5 27.exf5 ♖e2** Another solid choice, but the same position with the pawn on a2 could have been reached if Black had chosen to play 24...f5 earlier, instead of 24...♖e5. **28.axb5 axb5 29.♖b1** After the alternative 29.b3 Black would be the one with the chances. **29...♖xf5** Again the online team shows class and avoids mistakes. **30.d6 ♖ff2** The world squad establishes a powerful battery along the second rank. Without the passed d-pawn White would be bankrupt, now it is just perpetual check. **31.d7**



Draw.

Between moves against the rest of the world Magnus became Norwegian team champion with clubmates from Asker. Magnus was one of the team's three top scorers with 3½/5. He was strong but far from a well-rounded player. I stopped by

to watch one day and have to admit that I was squirming a bit when he didn't win an ending with two extra pawns against Stein Arild Årland (2259).

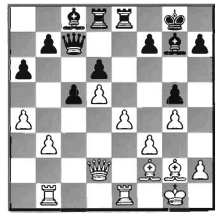
At this time Magnus' strong point was the opening phase of the game. He read opening books constantly and that type of knowledge sticks for those with an iron memory. In the ending he was not as strong – this comes with maturity and experience, but also here one can learn a lot by reading.

I recommended the book 'Fundamental Chess Endings', a weighty volume of over 500 pages in large format by Karsten Müller and Frank Lamprecht to Magnus. Not long afterwards Magnus had read it, not cover to cover but selectively, and since then his endgame has been more of a strength than a weakness. In the endgame he gets to use both his excellent powers of calculation and his finely tuned intuition.

The following game from the Norwegian team championships against Kristian Trygstad (2313) is another example of Magnus' attacking skills.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Kristian Trygstad**
Oslo 2002

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 0-0 5.c4 d6 6.d4 ♘bd7 7.♘c3 e5 8.e4 a6 A modern plan that can be effective if White doesn't know how to meet it. **9.♖e1 exd4 10.♘xd4 ♖e8 11.f3** For a change Magnus is not up on the latest opening theory. 11.h3 is normal, but Magnus' set-up is interesting. **♖b8 12.♘de2 ♘e5** Black has problems with carrying out the breakthrough with his b-pawn. Now 12...b5 fails to 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘d4 threatening both b5 and c6. **13.b3 c5** Now 13...b5 14.f4 is problematic for Black. **14.a4** Putting more of a lid on the b-pawn break. **14...♘c6 15.♗e3 ♘b4 16.♕d2 ♗e6 17.♖ad1 ♕b6 18.♗f2** Black keeps his d-pawn since taking on d6 fails due to a knight fork on c2 at the end. **18...♖bd8 19.♘f4 ♗c8 20.♖b1** The b-pawn needs defending. **20...♕c7 21.g4 g5 22.♘fd5 ♘bxd5 23.♘xd5 ♘xd5 24.cxd5!**



Well judged by Magnus. Such Benoni structures can be good for Black after some pieces have been exchanged but here White stands better on both flanks. **24...h6 25.a5** This keeps the queenside under control. **25...♗d7** 25...♗e5 to answer 26.h4 with 26...f6 was a thought, but White can also attack the queenside with b3-b4. **26.h4! gxh4 27.♗xh4 ♖b8** Black dreams of breaking and mounting pressure on the b-file but now serious trouble breaks out on the opposite flank. **28.g5! hxg5 29.♕xg5 c4** After 29...♕xa5 White can win the pawn back with 30.♕g3 when 31.♗f6 also threatens. **30.f4!** White sets a mating attack in motion. **30...c3** Black's counterplay is too slow. **31.♖e3 ♕c5 32.♗f2 c2 33.♖c1 f6 34.♕xg7+!** A simple finesse that decides the game. **34...♔xg7 35.♖g3+ ♔f7**

36.♗xc5 dxc5 37.♖xc2 b6 Black plays out to the time control on move 40. **38.axb6 ♖ec8 39.e5 fxe5 40.fxe5 ♖xb6** Black resigned.

The next tournament on the cards was the ShakkiNet International in Espoo, Finland. The Carlsens had lived in this fine Helsinki suburb for a year, from 1994-95, and the entire family was looking forward to a return visit. But this competition didn't begin until the end of June, a bit over a month after the Norwegian team championship. A rest was planned, with Magnus getting to calm down after a hectic schedule but before long he had symptoms of chess abstinence. After looking for a suitable event before Finland, they found the Pelaro Open in Gothenburg from 8-16 June.

Henrik took his two eldest daughters along on the four-hour drive along the beautiful Swedish coast and included an overnight stay in a tent, with swimming and sausage grilling as part of the summer package. The build-up couldn't have been better and the result reflected this.

Magnus scored 5 out of 9 and was just a half point short of his first international master norm. His endgame play was especially good. With a bit more experience he could have landed more points, but Magnus was now in a phase where he needed to chart just how strong international masters and grandmasters really were.

He played solid draws against three international masters – Kim Pilgaard (2426, Denmark), Vytautas Slapikas (2410, Lithuania) and Stanislav Smetankin (2455, Bulgaria) – and two grandmasters – Heikki Westerinen (2403, Finland) and Igor Rausis (2478, Latvia). This made losing on time against the Bulgarian IM Vladimir Poley rather irritating. One year later in the Salongernas IM-tournament in Stockholm Magnus would get his revenge against Poley.

In the first round against Øivind Pedersen (2051), the other Norwegian in the field, Magnus lost a pawn early, but once he got his attack going the tables turned.

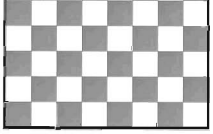
Against Vytautas Slapikas Magnus got to use his newly acquired endgame skills.

□ **Vytautas Slapikas**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Gothenburg 2002

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.d4 ♘c6 5.dxc5 ♕xd1+ Again Magnus chooses a variation where he gives up a pawn. **6.♔xd1 ♗f5** This reveals a lack of opening knowledge. The normal idea is to quickly play e7-e5 and the bishop often goes to g4. **7.♗e3 0-0-0+ 8.♘d2 ♘f6 9.♘gf3 e5 10.♗b5 ♘d5 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.♘xe5 ♘xe3+ 13.fxe3 ♗xc5 14.♖e1 ♖de8 15.♘xc6 ♗xe3** Magnus has the bishop pair for a pawn, but there are concrete problems with his position. **16.♘c4 ♗c5**

17.♘xa7+! One pawn for the bishop pair

was plausible but two is a bit much. **17...♔b7** 17...♗xa7 18.♘d6+ and the bishop on f5 falls. **18.♘b5 ♖xe1+ 19.♔xe1 ♖e8+ 20.♔d2 ♖d8+ 21.♘d4 ♗xd4 22.cxd4 ♖xd4+ 23.♔c3 ♖d3+ 24.♔b4 ♗e6 25.♖f1 ♖d4 26.b3 ♗xc4 27.bxc4** Magnus has managed to squirm his way into a rook ending that holds out good drawing chances. **27...f6 28.♖f2 ♔c6 29.♖e2 h5 30.a4 ♖d1 31.♖e6+ ♔d7 32.♖a6 ♔c8 33.♖c6+ ♔d7 34.♖a6 ♔c8 35.♖a8+ ♔b7 36.♖f8 g5 37.♖f7+ ♔b8 38.♖xf6 ♖d2 39.g3 ♖xh2 40.♖g6 g4 41.♖h6 ♖h3 42.a5 ♖xg3 43.♖xh5 ♖g1 44.♖g5 g3 45.♖g7 g2 46.♔c5 ♔a8 47.a6 ♔b8 48.♖b7+ ♔a8 49.♖b2 ♔a7 50.♔b5 ♔a8 51.♔b6 ♔b8 52.c5 ♖c1!** Magnus understands that he cannot sit and hold on to the g-pawn. **53.♖xg2 ♖b1+ 54.♔c6 ♔a7** These positions should be drawn but Black must play with precision. **55.♔c7 ♖h1 56.♖g7 ♔xa6 57.c6 ♔a7! 58.♔d7 After 58.♔d6+ ♔b6 59.♖b7+ ♔a6** White does not make progress. Black has many checks from the side. **58...♖h8 59.♖e7 ♔b6 60.♖f7 ♖g8 61.♖h7 ♖f8 62.♖g7**



62...♖h8! Magnus knows about 'the back rank defence'. White cannot make progress. **63.c7 ♔b7 64.♖g4 ♖h7+ 65.♔d8 ♖h8+ 66.♔d7 ♖h7+ 67.♔d8 ♖h8+** Draw.

Just a few days after the Gothenburg event Magnus and his maternal grandfather boarded a plane to Finland to take him to a closed, twelve-man IM-tournament. The rest of the family would go by car and arrive over a week later. More than chess and a reunion with Espoo tempted the Carlsen clan back to Finland. A special pizzeria also beckoned.

In 1995 the Carlsen family were regulars at a fantastic pizzeria. All they had to do was pick up the phone, say their name and 25 minutes later a man would arrive at their door in Vaateratie with their favourite pizza. Their expectant pilgrimage ended in a slight surprise when they found that their beloved pizzeria plied their trade in a very humble setting – they had only ordered by phone before. But the pizza was the same, just as good, and worth the trip.

Magnus' play was not as satisfying. A finish of 4 out of 11 and a rating performance of 2247 was OK, but still a bit of a disappointment compared to his previous result. The games were long, just like in Gothenburg, and Magnus had trouble maintaining his concentration – but it was good training and produced many exciting endgames.

At this time there was a lively debate in Norwegian junior circles about an odd variation where Black sacrifices a knight after just four moves. Magnus was inspired by this idea. In his game against Sampsa Nyysti (2242) from Finland Magnus said a silent prayer that Black would reply to the apparently limp 4.a3 with ...g6. This would allow him to reach this variation with colours reversed, and with the extra move 4.a3.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Sampsa Nyysti**
Helsinki 2002

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.a3 g6

5.♘xe5!? The pattern is clear – Magnus likes to sacrifice material. The correctness of the variation is not the main thing, White gets a lasting initiative, and that is most important. **5...♘xe5 6.d4 ♘c6 7.d5 ♘b8 8.e5 ♘g8 9.d6!** After this it is not easy for Black to get his pieces out. **9...cxd6 10.exd6 ♕f6 11.♘b5 ♘a6 12.♗c4 ♗h6 13.♕e2+ ♔f8 14.♗e3** Black can trade this piece off if he wants, but on White's terms. **14...♗xe3 15.fxe3 ♕h4+ 16.g3 ♕h5 17.♕f2 ♕f5 18.♕e2 ♕h5 19.♕f2 ♕f5 20.♕e2 ♘h6** Black should have been content with a draw. **21.♖f1 ♕h5 22.♕f2 ♕f5 23.♕e2 ♕e5** Here again Black could have repeated moves. **24.0-0-0 ♔g7 25.♖d5 ♕e8**

26.♕d2! White regains control of the centre, and this time Black is defenceless. **26...♖f8 27.♕d4+ f6 28.g4!** Now all of Black's pieces are tragically placed. **28...b6 29.g5 ♘f5 30.gxf6+ ♖xf6 31.♖dxf5! gxf5 32.♖g1+ ♕g6 33.♖xg6+ ♔xg6** If Black had his forces in play there might have been hope, but he never gets that far. **34.♗d5 ♖b8 35.e4 ♗b7 36.exf5+ ♖xf5 37.♕g4+ ♔f6 38.♕h4+ ♔g6 39.♗c4 ♘c5 40.b4 ♘e4 41.♘c7 ♘xd6?** A blunder in a bad position. **42.♕g3+** The knight falls. Black resigned.

The tournament result was mediocre but the goal set in the spring had been reached. Just a few days later he could play in the Norwegian championship's top group, the youngest ever to do so at eleven years and seven months old.

5 International title hunting

July-December 2002

'Hi Magnus... You're cute... Want a date??
Cuddlez and hugz, Berit *smooch*'
– Write-in question to Magnus online at VG Nett Interactive.

The clear goal for the previous six months had been to qualify for the Elite group of the Norwegian championship – the top class that played for the national title – in Røros in July 2002. Strictly speaking a national rating of 2300 was needed but the chess federation usually sets the group at 20 players and Magnus made this cut, out of a field of about 500 players.

Two years before, in the Norwegian championship in Asker 2000, Magnus had been in the 'Miniputt' (U-11) section. The next year he tried to win the Junior title (U-21) and now he was already jousting with the best players in the country. The tournament director of the youngest group in Røros, Sigmund Salamonsen, encouraged the Miniputts to show determination: 'The way to the top is not long – two years ago there was a boy sitting here in the youngest class that is now in the title group.'

Magnus has been in a completely different class than his peers, but hopefully his development has been an inspiration to other youngsters. There is no doubt that he had a broad supporter base at Røros and he was the centre of attention, particularly for two small girls who stood staring from behind the ropes around the top group.

Magnus wandered around inside the barrier when it was not his turn to move. An older gentleman had not been keeping up with the news and indignantly asked Magnus to leave the area when he found the small boy watching a game. Torstein Bae, who had been concentrating on his game overheard this. He turned around with a smile and explained, 'He's playing here', much to the crowd's amusement.

The tournament was not a big success for Magnus. He scored 3 out of 8 and also got a point on forfeit. He was probably tired after the events in Gothenburg and Espoo, but it was also hard to concentrate on chess with so much else to do. The family was living at a cabin with another family, and there were plenty of kids and fun, football especially taking up much of Magnus' time.

Magnus found it more interesting to play in the Elite and try to become Norwegian champion than aiming for one of the age-limited groups. But when the national blitz tournaments took place on the penultimate day, he had to admit to a craving for medals. Having won this event, where each player has five minutes for the entire game, in the two youngest classes before, Magnus decided to try the next group up, the Cadet (U-16). He took his third blitz gold without trouble.

All the football and running around at Røros was good practice for his warm-up

for the Bergen International a week later. The Carlsen's cabin in Tyinkrysset in Jotunheimen is halfway over the mountain to Bergen, but they did not go there for a rest. The cabin visit included an eleven hour hike from Eidsbugarden to Sjogholstind. This translates to a four-hour trek in hilly terrain, followed by a three-hour steep climb up and down the mountain, with a final four-hour march back to the starting point. Magnus is no stranger to these trips, so there's nothing wrong with his physical condition.

The 2002 edition was the third consecutive late summer international organised by Bergen's chess club. The first year the event attracted 51 players, the 2001 tournament grew to 95, but in 2002 only 40 turned up. It isn't easy being a chess organiser, and the drop killed the Bergen's International for the time being – the money and effort expended proved to be too much. When Bergen, with all of its tourist attractions in a beautiful summer setting backed up by dedicated organisers cannot attract players, who can? There are still people in Norway willing to try, and hopefully Magnus's success can contribute by making chess more visible.

With 5 out of 9 Magnus finished in 17th place in Bergen with a rating performance of 2285. This result raised his rating eight points but all in all it was just a mediocre performance compared to his success in Gothenburg not long before. Still, there were bright spots.

At that time I had English grandmaster and German Bundesliga clubmate Julian Hodgson, and his wife Lizette, visiting us in our summer home in Stord, an hour's drive south of Bergen. We followed the games on the Internet. I remember the normally merry Hodgson watching Magnus' game with a serious look on his face and exclaiming 'This boy is good!' He said the same thing that Kulaots, I and many others had remarked before – that there was something special about Magnus. We could live with his results needing improvement, talent shone from Magnus' play nevertheless.

Take his first round game against Stian Instefjord (1603), for example. Magnus should normally win easily, but after some poor opening play he needed to wave his magic wand.

□ **Stian Instefjord**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Bergen 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.♖d1!? Normally White castles queenside here with the intention of a pawn-storm on the kingside, but White's approach is not stupid. **♗d7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♘b3 ♘e8** After this the d-pawn becomes an Achilles heel. The bishop on e7 may not look strong, but it has an important defensive role protecting the d-pawn. Maybe Black should have just stood his ground and played 11...b5 – 12.♗xf6 gxf6 does not need to be scary for Black. **12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.f4 ♖d8 14.♗f3 ♗c8 15.♕f2 ♕c7 16.♖d2 b5 17.a3 ♗b7 18.♖fd1 ♘f6 19.g4** White has played well He now has a strong initiative on the kingside as well. **19...♕e7 20.♕b6!** White now also threatens 21.e5. **20...♖b8!?** Magnus tries to complicate in a difficult position, but this is not completely correct. **21.♖xd6 b4 22.axb4 ♘xb4** Magnus'

point is 23.♕xb4 ♗xe4, but White can secure a material advantage and better position with the simple 24.♕xb8 ♖xb8 25.♘xe4. On 25...♘d5 26. f5 looks strong. **23.♕f2 ♘fd5!**

24.e5? Now Magnus gets maximum returns from his bluff. White could still keep his advantage with 24.♘xd5 ♘xd5 25.♖6xd5! exd5 26.exd5. **24...♘xf4 25.♕g3 ♗xf3 26.♕xf3 ♕g5!** Magnus has finally taken control. White has pawn weaknesses everywhere. **27.♘c5 f5! 28.♘d7** White never gets the time to enjoy his material advantage, but his position was difficult in any case. **28...fxg4 29.♕g3 ♘h3+ 30.♔g2 ♖f2+ 31.♔h1 ♖f3 32.♘e4 ♖xg3** Threatening mate. **33.hxg3 ♕e3 34.♘xb8 ♕xe4+ 35.♔h2 ♘f2** White resigned.

Magnus had an excellent opening repertoire at this time. Against grandmaster Dimitrios Anagnostopoulos (2446) from Greece he even got a variation of the Sicilian Dragon that we had studied a bit, but still some problems remained.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Dimitrios Anagnostopoulos**
Bergen 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 9.♗c4 hinders d6-d5 but costs some time. **9...d5** In the old days this was considered something to prevent but in recent years White has worked out several promising plans against this. **10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♘xd5** This is the boldest. 12.♗d4 is considered to give White an uncomplicated advantage. **12...cxd5 13.♕xd5 ♕c7 14.♕c5** Not 14.♕xa8 ♗f5 and Black gets too much activity. **14...♕b8** This is more flexible than 14...♕b7. Sometimes the queen can go to e5 or f4. **15.♕a3 a5**

16.♗d4? After this White cannot repair matters. 16.♗c4 or 16.♗d3 are interesting. The position is little explored and Black must prove he has compensation for the pawn before White completes his development. **16...♖d8 17.♕c5?** Another bad move. 17.♕e3 loses after 17...♕d6 because of the pin on the d-file but 17.♕xe7!? is not completely clear. **17...♗f5 18.♗c4** White can still not take on g7 because of the queen check on f4. **18...♖c8!** White cannot hold his position together. **19.♕d5 e6 20.♕xa8 ♕xa8 21.♗xg7 ♔xg7 22.♗d3** and at the same time White resigned.

Julian Hodgson got a chance to meet Magnus at the Norwegian 'café chess'

championship in Bergen. The grandmaster won, without their game changing his opinion of Magnus. Hodgson and I were just on holiday and had no energy for a whole tournament, but a trip to town and an evening of light chess was just the ticket. Neither of us managed to win the café event, nor did Magnus, who finished with 4/6. He couldn't say no to a tournament, even if it was just as late, smoky and noisy as the year before.

Ole Valaker, a Bergen player rated around 2200, has followed Magnus as a journalist for Nettavisen and he reported the post-Gothenburg period as a weak one. This says a lot about the kind of expectations chess insiders had for Magnus. He was still rising rating-wise, with performances between 2200-2300, but his rate of improvement was not as great as before.

In a sporting sense there was no doubt that Magnus was developing. In Bergen he got the chance to cross swords with two GMs and one IM in the international, plus the meeting with Hodgson in café chess. It would not be long before Magnus was on even terms with such players.

He may have played a lot, but Magnus was just as hungry for more and his chess appetite seemed insatiable. His family had said that he could not play in Kiel in mid-August, just a few weeks after Bergen, but they finally had to give in. The entire NTG class of about 16 players started their school year by making the trip as well, which made the event even more tempting. Besides, there would be a long chess break after Kiel.

The rest of the family were off to their cabin, so the problem was, who would accompany Magnus? He was still far too young to be travelling on his own, even if in the company of a large crowd of Norwegians. In the end his paternal grandmother stepped in. She had no problems with humble accommodations at a youth hostel but did insist that she and Magnus should have their own room. A grandmother splitting a four-man room with NTG students would be asking too much, even for such a good sport.

I attended the first half of the event as a kind of travel guide since I had to hurry back and welcome a visiting contingent of players from China.

Against travel companion Victor Hansen (2142) Magnus demonstrated the meaning of dark-square control.

□ **Victor Hansen**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Kiel 2002

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c6 3.d4 d5 4.e3 ♗f5 5.♘c3 e6 6.♗e2 White must go after the bishop with 6.♘h4 if he is to hope for an advantage. **6...♘bd7 7.♘h4** Good idea, but a bit late. **7...♗e4 8.f3 ♗g6 9.♘xg6 hxg6 10.e4?!** And this is a bit early. **10...dxe4 11.fxe4 e5! 12.dxe5?** After 12.d5 ♗c5 Black stands well but there is no crisis for White. **12...♘xe5** An unassailable knight in the centre is worth a lot. **13.♗g5 ♕b6 14.♕b3 ♗c5 15.♕xb6 axb6 16.♗xf6** White isn't playing well, but this gives us a chance to see an illustration of the difference between a strong knight and a bad bishop. **16...gxf6**

17.♔d2 ♗b4 18.♔c2 ♔e7 19.a3 ♗xc3 20.♔xc3 ♖h4 Black wins a pawn already. **21.♗f3 ♖ah8 22.h3 ♘xf3** It is a shame to have to give up such a strong piece, but sometimes you have to ruin your position a bit to win a game. **23.gxf3 ♖xh3 24.♖xh3 ♖xh3 25.♖f1** The vast superiority of Black's pieces continues in the rook ending. **25...♔e6 26.♔d4 ♖h2 27.♖b1 f5 28.c5 b5 29.♖e1 f4 30.♔c3 ♖f2** White resigned.

Magnus finished in 15th place in a field of 130 and had the best result of the Norwegians but this was just about his expected score by rating.

New challenges were waiting the day after the Kiel ferry returned. We had a dream at that time of having an NTG chess class trip to China. This dream became even more interesting to pursue since we thought it was unattainable. Thus it turned into a kind of exercise in barrier breaking. 'If we can do this, we can do anything, including NTG students becoming grandmasters' ran our train of thought.

When we eventually learned that the Chinese table tennis trainer at NTG had good contacts with sports directors in the Hebei province just outside of Beijing things started to happen. Chess is considered a sport in China and we had obviously come to the right person. Soon we were in phone communication and before long we had an event planned.

First, four players and two guides would come to Norway for two weeks. Then we would pay a return visit. We were even more satisfied when we learned that the Chinese were sending three strong GMs, Zhang Zhong, Peng Xiaomin and Zhang Pengxiang, plus IM Wang Rui in their delegation.

The event unfolded in friendship and brilliant weather, and featured various matches against players from NTG circles. Magnus just managed to get home in time to reach a blitz tournament where all of the Norwegians faced all of the Chinese team twice. Magnus managed just 1½ out of 8 but scalped Zhang Pengxiang, who became Chinese champion shortly afterwards.

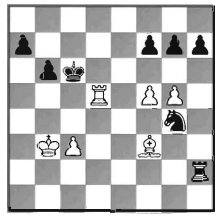
A few days later Magnus and I played against two of the Chinese team live on newspaper VG's Internet pages. The days of dot-com fever were long gone but there was still plenty of enthusiasm for chess stunts. At any rate VG welcomed the suggestion and were even more pleased by the result. Over 10,000 people clicked in to watch the games during the hour they lasted. This was far above expectations and more than the live coverage of the football World Cup the day before. True, the Internet is not the ideal medium for covering football, but nevertheless... This event was an eye-opener for many who had not seen the possibilities of chess as a spectator sport.

It was a pity that Magnus didn't manage to score what should have been a

well-earned full point against Wang Rui (2503).

□ **Wang Rui**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2002

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 dxc4 4.a4?! As Magnus demonstrates, this is inaccurate. 4.e4, 4.e3 or 4.♘f3 are normal but White is uncertain about what to do if Black protects his c-pawn with 4...b5, so his move is understandable. **4...e5!** Black has no problems after this. **5.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 6.♘xd1 ♘a6 7.♘e3** This is clumsy. **7...♘c5! 8.♗d2** 8.♘xc4 ♘b3 wins material since 9.♖b1 is met by 9...♗f5. **8...♗e6 9.♘f3 ♘b3 10.♖d1 ♗c5** Magnus develops smoothly. **11.♗c3 ♗xe3** A tripled pawn is rarely good news. **12.fxe3 ♘e7 13.♘d2 ♘d5!** White's position is already creaking. **14.♘xc4 ♘xc3 15.♘d6+ ♔e7 16.bxc3 ♘c5 17.a5 b6 18.a6 ♘d7!** Black has a positionally won game. **19.e4 ♘xe5 20.e3 ♖hd8 21.♘f5+ ♗xf5 22.exf5 ♖xd1+ 23.♔xd1 ♖d8+ 24.♔c1 ♘d3+ 25.♔c2** The rook ending after 25.♗xd3 ♖xd3 is completely hopeless for White. **25...♘f2 26.♖g1 ♖d1 27.g4 ♖a1 28.♔b2 ♖e1 29.♔c2 ♖xe3** Magnus could have kept his opponent passive a bit longer, but it does not hurt to take material. **30.♗g2 ♘e4 31.♔b2 ♖e2+ 32.♔b3 ♘c5+ 33.♔a3 ♘xa6 34.♗xc6 ♘c5 35.h3 ♖e3 36.♔b2 ♘d3+** There was nothing wrong with taking on h3 at once either. **37.♔c2 ♘e5 38.♗d5 ♖xh3 39.g5 ♔d6 40.♖d1 ♔c5?** Magnus starts committing suicide. After 40...♔c7 he is two pawns up and clearly winning. **41.♗e4** Suddenly the black king is in real danger. **41...♖h2+** After 41...f6 Magnus is still winning, but White has fighting chances that he doesn't deserve. **42.♔b3 ♘g4 43.♖d5+ ♔c6 44.♗f3**



44...♘e3?? It was still not too late to save the situation with 44...♖f2 45.♖d3+ ♖xf3 with a likely draw. After 44...♘f2 White has the elegant 45.g6! hxg6 46.f6! gxf6 47.♖h5+ winning, but with only seconds left on his clock Wang may not have found this. After Magnus' move things are simple. **45.♖d2+** A sad finish to a fine game by Magnus. Black resigned.

Meanwhile I won my game against Zhang Pengxiang surprisingly easily, so the match ended 1-1.

Afterwards Magnus and I sat in the VG newsroom and answered live questions on their interactive web service. Questions came in at a hectic pace, and not all of them were about chess. For instance: Hi Magnus ... You're cute ... Want a date?? Cuddlez and hugz, Berit *smooch*', (signed: love_magnus@hotmail.com)! I can only say that Magnus is still a cute and charming boy.

But there were also serious questions: 'Is it not quite risky to give such a young boy so much attention around an ability that sets him apart? I understand that Magnus' father is aware of this and Simen knows enough about being declared a ge-

nius that he also knows the dangers. But how can one assure that Magnus will have a good life, including the normal criteria for being a happy young man?'

We received several comments like this then, but lately this faction has fallen silent. The opposite sentiment has become popular: 'Now it is important that Magnus gets the conditions needed to play full time!'

Magnus's break after summer's tournaments lasted all of three weeks. The four-nation Nordic Junior team championship in Viby, Denmark took place in early September. Sadly, Finland had to pull out, leaving three nations and two teams from Denmark. Each team fielded six juniors (U-20) and six cadets (U-16). Magnus was the highest rated Norwegian of any age, but had to settle for top cadet board. Perhaps the federation had hoped to sink plenty of points there, but things did not go according to plan.

Whether it was a lack of rest or the usual problem with Magnus being fatigued by a late starting first round that lasted to well over midnight, he was low on fuel and needlessly lost a long endgame in the first round against Kezli Ong (2173) from Sweden.

The next day things got even worse. With play starting at 9 am, a sleepy Magnus committed one of his life's worst blunders.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Jacob Vang Glud**
Viby 2002

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 ♘bd7 7.e3 0-0 8.♗d3 ♖e8 9.0-0 c6 10.♕c2 ♘f8 11.h3 The Russian-American GM Alexander Yermolinsky recommends this as a flexible move. White keeps all of his options open. **11...♗d6 12.e4** This is one of four different plans White can choose from. The others are a classical minority attack of breaking with the b-pawn, a set-up with a knight on e5 followed by f2-f4 or a calm build-up in the centre with an eventual f2-f3 and later e3-e4. **12...dxe4 13.♗xe4 ♗e7 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♖ad1 ♕a5 16.d5** White achieves nothing with this. Perhaps Magnus chose the wrong plan on move 12. **16...♗xc3 17.bxc3 cxd5 18.♖xd5 ♕c7 19.♖b1 ♖b8 20.♘d4 ♗e6 21.♘xe6 ♖xe6**

22.♖d3?? Magnus doesn't do things like this often, and it just goes to show that even the best can make mistakes. **22...♖xe4** White resigned.

Magnus managed to repair things a bit with a win in the third and final game over Peter Martin Leimand (2003) from Denmark's second team, but the trip was hardly a success for him. The team did well though, finishing second to Sweden.

With so many tournaments there had not been much time for training, either with

me or the NTG group. In total we had about seven sessions of about three hours each in the autumn of 2002. We rarely had time to do more than analyse Magnus' own games in these meetings, and barely enough to do that. Even if we had not had such close contact at this time, both I and Leif Erlend Johannessen, who in the course of the summer had become a grandmaster, completely agreed that Magnus was strong, much stronger than his recent results indicated.

I believed that he deserved a place among the six chosen for the Norwegian Olympic team in Bled, Slovenia in October-November, and tried to present convincing arguments for his participation to the federation's selection committee. This didn't seem to influence them, which is reasonable enough. They are supposed to do their job without interference from the players, but I thought that Magnus was good enough, especially when they began to look for people in the 2300 range for last board. Magnus would also continue to improve in the time up to the Olympics. Maybe this was hard to see from the outside, we who trained with Magnus saw a more detailed picture.

Moreover, it would not have been a bad idea for the sponsor to have Magnus along. The federation had succeeded in securing the respected classification society Det Norske Veritas as chief sponsor for the Olympic team, an excellent idea for both sides. Veritas has divisions in over 100 countries, suited for a chess Olympiad with 130 competing nations. The idea was to publish daily reports, games and other treats on an web page that could be read by all Veritas divisions around the world. A few Magnus stories would have made these reports more exciting.

I also believed that participating in the Olympics would have great educational value for Magnus. With his ability to soak up information, just walking around the hall watching the world's best players for over two weeks would be a massive learning experience.

My wife was expecting a baby just before the event, but out of consideration to the sponsor I said that I could compete in the final days if the birth went according to schedule. From both a sporting and family viewpoint this was not a satisfactory solution – much better to send Magnus. A week before the birth and several rounds into the Olympiad my father died suddenly. So there was no Olympiad for me, either.

Magnus was also passed by for the World Junior championship held in Goa, India, in December. Here there was no doubt about playing strength, Magnus topped the junior list but this time it was a question of a traditional principle that the oldest players would be sent, those who might not get such an opportunity again.

For the European or World championships in age classes there was no discussion but Magnus still had to choose between the European or World U-12 Boys since the federation stuck to its practice of one event per candidate, despite having a potential gold medallist for once.

Magnus chose the European U-12 in Peniscola, south of Barcelona, since this would keep the option open of him reaching the Olympics, where the team selection was still being discussed. It later turned out that Jon Ludvig Hammer, the

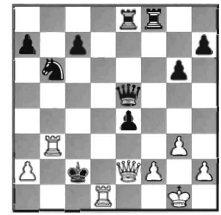
other U-12 candidate, could not attend the World event. Henrik Carlsen offered to extend his services as delegation leader for the European to include the World, and Magnus got to play both.

With a FIDE rating of 2214 Magnus was ranked fourth in the European, behind Russians Dmitry Andreikin (2369), Ildar Khairullin (2329) and Ian Nepomniachtchi (2306). Fifth seed was England's prodigy David Howell (2211). All of these had plenty of experience in this kind of event. Magnus had won two Nordic championships, but had never played in a youth tournament of this level.

Magnus steamed ahead, started with four wins and played magnificently. In the second round against Adnan Orujov, Magnus displayed both his opening knowledge and tactical ability.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Adnan Orujov**
Peniscola 2002

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♗a6 9.b3 0-0-0 10.g3 ♖e8 11.♗b2 f6 12.♗g2 fxe5 13.0-0 In a game from the 1990 world championship Karpov drew Kasparov with 13...h5. Orujov's move cannot be an improvement. **13...g6 14.♕d2 ♘b6 15.♕a5 ♔b7** Karpov chose to withdraw his bishop to b7. **16.♗a3 ♕f6 17.♗xf8 ♖hxf8 18.♘c3 ♕e7 19.♘a4 d6** 19...♘xa4 20.bxa4 wins at once for White. **20.♗xc6+! ♔xc6 21.♕xa6 e4 22.c5!** White must hurry as Black is building counterplay with his e-pawn. **22...dxc5 23.♘xc5 ♔xc5?!** Black's only chance lay in 23...e3, even if White should win here with accurate play. **24.♖fd1** Black's king is ensnared. **24...♕e5 25.b4+ ♔xb4 26.♖ab1+ ♔c3 27.♖b3+ ♔c2 28.♕e2** Mate.



In the fifth round Magnus equalised comfortably with black against Ian Nepomniachtchi (2306) using the Alekhine's Defence. A more experienced soul would have settled for a draw but Magnus wanted to win, overpressed, got in time trouble and lost instead.

In the next round he again won a fine game, against Dutch talent Wouter Spoelman.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Wouter Spoelman**
Peniscola 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘ge2 e5 4.♘d5 ♘ge7 5.♘ec3 d6 6.♗c4 ♘xd5 7.♘xd5 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d3 ♗g5 10.f4 exf4 11.♗xf4 ♘e5 12.♗xe5 dxe5 White has a nice square on d5 but Black has the bishop pair and no weaknesses, and should have nothing to fear. **13.♕e1 ♗e6 14.♕g3 f6 15.♔h1 ♔h8 16.♗b3 ♕d6 17.♘c3 ♗d7** Black does well by keeping this bishop. **18.a4 ♗f4 19.♕e1 f5?!** Right plan, but Black could have prepared it with 19...g6.

20.g3 ♗h6 21.exf5 ♗xf5 22.♗d5 White's problem earlier was that both the knight and bishop did the same job, namely, controlling d5. Now the bishop gets a new task on the long diagonal while the knight has new prospects as well. **22...♗h3 23.♗g2 ♗xg2+ 24.♔xg2**

24...c4? We have a typical strong knight versus bad bishop position, but the young Dutchman makes it easy for Magnus with this pointless pawn sacrifice. **25.dxc4 ♖xf1 26.♕xf1 ♗e3 27.♕e2 ♕b6 28.♖b1 ♖f8 29.♘d5!** Black doesn't get the time to invade to f2. **29...♕g6 30.♘xe3 ♕e4+ 31.♔g1 ♖f3 32.♖e1 h5 33.♕d3** Black resigned.

Wouter Spoelman turned up a bit later at NTG with IM Karel van der Weide and another talented young Dutch player. The Dutch chess federation wanted a first-hand report about NTG and how chess was taught there, which flattered us a great deal. The Netherlands is one of the world's strongest chess nations, especially gifted at staging events, as witnessed by several traditional super-tournaments. That someone from Holland should come to Norway to learn about chess training from us seemed almost absurd.

But we had Magnus Carlsen. This must have made them stop and think. Recently the Norwegian chess federation even received praise in an editorial in Schacknytt, Sweden's leading chess magazine.

However, Magnus Carlsen is first and foremost the result of his and his family's efforts. He has not had any special federation support above the norm for Norwegian youth players. Nearly the opposite – as the year before, in 2001, the federation refused to let Magnus participate in either the European or World U-12 championships.

A year later the federation said no when Magnus' older sister wanted to play in the World Girls U-14. The entire Carlsen clan was there, and instead of being a tourist she wondered if she could take part. The organisers agreed, but the federation said no. The Carlsens chose to ignore this decision, Ellen played anyway, and the federation found no way to retaliate.

Magnus has since commented that the federation could be better at motivating young players. But things will change. Norway doesn't have the most venerable chess traditions but there are now lots of children playing chess here, and the best are getting attention.

In the seventh round of the European Magnus was once again on first board, this time against top-rated Dmitry Andreikin, who could already boast of four or five trips to the medals podium from earlier Euro and World events. Magnus had prepared for the game with Swedish grandmaster Tiger Hillarp-Persson, who was there as trainer for the Swedish players.

A Swedish IM who had also been in such youth championships reportedly

said at this time that in Russia there were many 'Magnus Carlsens'. But Tiger, who had been training and analysing with Magnus, just said: 'No – there is only one Magnus Carlsen.'

Norway has never had the resources to send more than an administrative leader to such championships. Training has generally been limited to studying the games afterwards. Magnus has largely done opening preparation before games and tournaments on his own. Many, especially those used to the professional Eastern European chess traditions, were shocked by this.

But now he got a little help from Tiger and came out of the opening in excellent shape. On move 32 the Russian had weathered the worst of the storm and offered a draw, but Magnus wanted to win, pressed too hard and in the end blundered a rook.

Only gold was good enough for Magnus, but he had to settle for a draw in round eight and, disenchanted, he finished with another draw and ended up in sixth place. Magnus had played well but was not completely satisfied with his final result. But he had gained valuable experience that would come in very handy already in a month's time, when the World U-12 would take place in Heraklion, Crete.

Often the secret to Magnus's success is taking the time to rest completely before a tournament. Then he tends to come back at full strength and play his best. This happened now, but first, there was a brief intermezzo in Lillehammer, a week after the European.

The father of Askild Bryn, who would study chess at NTG a year later, worked at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute with various projects in former Yugoslavia and had arranged an exchange program for young chess players. Ten Bosnians turned up for the Hafjell Junior International. The U-16 event had no other foreigners, and even though the top Norwegians played, the event was well below what Magnus was now used to. But there was one very strong Bosnian present.

Borki Predojevic may have dominated chess at home even more than Magnus did in Norway. Just 15 years old he was already an international master and rated 2437. He was a size too big, even for Magnus, but the young Norwegian won his other five games comfortably.

If Magnus had stagnated a bit in recent months, though at a solid level of performances between 2200-2300, the world youth championships in Heraklion would be a new breakthrough. However, the preparation for the first game was less than ideal.

The playing hall looked like a gigantic Greek temple and was fantastic in every way, but it became total chaos nonetheless. The first round was scheduled to start at 4.30 p.m. and hundreds of boys and girls in five different classes (U-18, U-16, U-14, U-12 and U-10), their seconds and delegation heads arrived at the proper time – but the organisers had not managed to have the pairings ready. Everyone had to wait outside. Time passed. One hour turned to two and still nothing happened. Several people were in danger of being trampled in the crowd near the entrance. Eventually the organisers began to slip players from the youngest class in, with the only change being that they had to

wait inside instead of out, without food or drink or adult supervision. Things gradually got underway. The eldest classes started at 9.45 p.m., over five hours delayed and after four changes in the published pairings.

In Magnus' group things still went wrong. He was paired as an unrated and sat on 58th board with black instead of playing White on board 7, where he belonged. Annoyed, there seemed little choice but to start. Magnus got a good position but on move 27 and the time nearly midnight, he sacrificed a piece for no reason and lost.

Even though the conditions were the same for everyone, such chaos opens the way for random results. Suddenly, the event is not about chess playing strength, it becomes just as important to handle stress and non-sporting factors, and not everyone is prepared for this.

I had a football trainer who used to talk about 'handling'. It can rain, the pitch might be a disgrace, the referee could be a dolt, it makes no difference. These are things you have to learn to handle. You cannot control circumstances. They will never be perfect. But you can control yourself and the way you handle external impulses.

I remember Bent Larsen, Denmark's former super-grandmaster, used to write brilliant tournament reports for the Swedish chess magazine Schacknytt, but there was always some reason or other that he had not done better. It is good to have self-confidence, but excuses will get you nowhere.

The opening loss resulted in Magnus relaxing. In the European there had been too much focus on winning the tournament. Now it was just about playing chess, making the best move in the position in front of you and having fun. This is the mode where one plays best.

Magnus played optimally and swept his opponents aside. The game against German Falco Bindrich (2172) in the sixth round could go straight into a textbook. Henrik wrote this about the game in his Internet report:

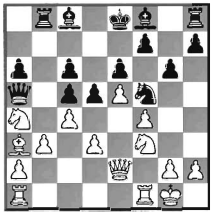
'Playing white against German Falco Bindrich, Magnus met an experienced world championship player who, after a mediocre European result, had begun well, including a win over a Russian rated over 2300. But Magnus had prepared himself well and delivered an instructive lesson. With 1. e4 c5 2. ♘c3 d6 Falco was prevented from playing his usual Najdorf Sicilian and at the same time the Grand Prix Attack with 3.f4 gained in strength since he would later lose a move when playing ...d5. After 6. 0-0 a6 7. ♗xc6 bxc6 Black lost a move chasing a bishop that was going to take on c6 anyway, and then stood badly.

After e6 and d5 followed by White's e5 the bishop on g7 is paralysed and White can attack the c5 pawn undisturbed. In desperation Black sacrificed the exchange on b4, but without gaining counterplay. The next few moves see all lines leading to the black king being opened and Black resigned after 22 moves, a pawn and the exchange down and worse to come.'

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Falko Bindrich
Heraklion 2002

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 d6 3.f4 ♘c6 4.♘f3 g6 5.♗b5 ♗g7 6.0-0 a6 7.♗xc6+ bxc6

8.♕e2 e6 9.e5 d5 10.b3 ♘h6 11.♗a3 ♗f8 12.♘a4 ♕a5 13.d3 ♖b8 14.c4 ♘f5



15.♕e1! ♖b4 16.♗xb4 cxb4 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♖c1 c5 19.♕f2 d4 20.♘d2 ♗b7 21.♘c4 ♕c7 22.♖fe1 Black resigned.

After another win in the seventh round against David Berzces (2232) from Hungary, Magnus was in the lead with Ian Nepomniachtchi (2344), the Russian that had just won the European, and Nguyen from Vietnam who had impressed the world with a 8½ out of 9 result in an IM-norm qualifier in Budapest the summer before, and had also won the World U-10 two years before. It would be an incredibly exciting finish.

Magnus did well against Nepomniachtchi in the eighth round, and wise from his experience in the European, he played more carefully and the game ebbed out in a draw. Henrik Carlsen wrote running Internet reports after each round. There were 11 rounds and a rest day, so it took plenty of time, but it turned into a slow-motion thriller for readers.

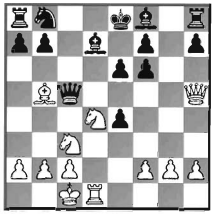
I wasn't the only one that started the day by logging on to the 'net and reading the latest report from Greece. After the ninth round we found this waiting for us online:

'Magnus met the Indonesian Andrean Susilodinata (2242) with black and played the Alekhine's. In a rather equal position Magnus decided to spend four moves with the manoeuvre ♘c6-b4-a2-b4-c6 in order to win a pawn. White's ensuing attack made the Nordic spectators nervous, but if there was a way to win White didn't find it. After precise counterplay White had to simplify, a pawn down and with inferior pawn structure. Magnus won quickly and elegantly with an a-pawn escorted by a rook behind and to the side.'

Magnus had won again! Now, two rounds before the end, he was in shared first place with Nepomniachtchi. In the tenth and penultimate round Magnus followed up with a crushing win in just 15 moves against Yury Kuzubov (2186) from Ukraine, who came to the event fresh from his victory in the powerful B-group (under 2400) at the Chigorin Memorial in St. Petersburg, Russia.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Yury Kuzubov
Heraklion 2002

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 d5 3.♗xf6 gxf6 Most recapture with the e-pawn but it is at least as interesting to take back the other way. **4.♘c3** It is more common to play for c2-c4, but Magnus prefers to break with the e-pawn. **4...e6** 4...f5 or 4...♗f5 is more logical. **5.♘f3 c5** It was still not too late to hinder e2-e4 with 5...f5. **6.e4!** Now White can exploit his lead in development. **6...cxd4 7.♘xd4 dxe4 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.♕h5! ♕b6 10.0-0-0 ♕c5?** White is better, but after 10...♗xb5 there is no immediate crisis.



11.♘xe4! ♕xh5 12.♘xf6+ ♔e7 13.♘xh5 ♘c6 14.♗xc6 ♗xc6 15.♖he1 Black resigned. It is understandable that Black did not have the heart to play on with 15...♗h6+ 16.f4 ♔f8 17.♘xc6 bxc6 and now either 18.g4 or 18.♖d7, but 15...♔e8 was worth a try, even if the result would surely have been the same.

Nepomniachtchi only managed a draw in this round, which gave Magnus a half point lead going into the final round. The tension that disappeared after the first round loss was now back with a vengeance and the excitement spread beyond Norway's chess circles.

The decisive last round game could be followed live on the organisers' web site. Magnus had a tough task with white against David Howell (2224) who already had his own, rather professional web site festooned with advertising. There was clearly organisation here. The English second commented to Magnus' father that it looked as if all the pressure was on Howell – he was visibly nervous while Magnus appeared unruffled. The spectators were undoubtedly the most nervous, both the Nordic followers on the spot and his supporters watching from home. Magnus gradually built up a clear advantage and at one point was winning. But chess is a brutal game, and a moment's loss of concentration ruined everything. Suddenly the win was gone and Magnus had to settle for a draw.

On the neighbouring board Nepomniachtchi long appeared to have problems but suddenly things cleared for him. The experienced Russian hauled in the win and pulled even with Magnus. Both had nine points but Nepomniachtchi's opponents had performed better than Magnus' and so the Russian was crowned the winner, Magnus had to settle for silver.

With a rating performance of over 2500 this was nevertheless an enormous result for Magnus. It also signalled a leap in strength. He was now merciless against players rated around 2200 and has been since. The result made some waves in Norwegian media, but there was nothing like the frenzy that would break out a year and a half later. VG wrote about a 'Norwegian chess sensation' and there were some headlines here and there. Magnus became better known but it was still a job for us to get publicity. In the spring of 2004 it would be the reverse, with journalists queuing up to get material about Magnus.

Magnus gave a rare interview to Hans Olav Lahlum for Gullaksen's web site. One thing Lahlum learned was that Nepomniachtchi was a hopeless billiards opponent ('He started to cheat when he was about to lose.') and that Magnus' allergy to 'cultural experiences' was already strong ('Everything was nice except for the rest day, when papa managed to say yes to an extra sightseeing trip offered by the organisers.').

Magnus admitted to studying chess three or four hours a day, with reading

Donald Duck (a Norwegian passion), playing football and skiing being his favourite pastimes. If he watched TV, it was to see football or skiing.

What kind of relationship did he have towards girls?

Magnus: 'I lost to one in the Gausdal Troll Masters in January 2002, I think.'

Magnus has always been withdrawn around journalists. This is partly due to his being shielded but the main reason is that he hates 'to be interviewed by journalists who know nothing about chess!' In another Lahlum interview a year later Magnus made special mention of three questions he was sick and tired of:

1. 'Why do you play chess?'

2. 'How old were you when you started to play chess?'

3. 'What do you have to do to become a grandmaster?'

Lahlum introduced his 2002 interview with a concise look at the Magnus phenomenon that year:

' "He'll stagnate soon!" mumbled diverse (jealous) competitors in Norwegian chess when the still 11-year-old Magnus Carlsen passed 2100 nationally and internationally a year ago. Self-proclaimed child psychologists feared that 2002 would be the year where Magnus burned out or gave up. And this after two years of miraculous progress that made him the "youngest more or less everything" in Norwegian chess history. As 2002 now goes into its final phase, we can establish that Magnus has had a new year of major progress... This weekend (30.11.2002) he turned 12, but still smiles like a 'miniputt' every time he starts a new tournament.'

6 International Master

January-July 2003

'Magnus talks like he is 18, plays like he is 25, but is, incredibly, still just 12 years old.'
– Hans Olav Lahlum in a pre-Norwegian championship report.

In just over two years, since his chess enthusiasm began in earnest in autumn 2000 until the end of 2002, Magnus managed to play nearly 300 serious, rated, tournament games in addition to various blitz and other minor events. The time between tournaments went to different types of chess training for several hours a day. Magnus had the fever.

His father had to use enormous amounts of time on Magnus. The boy could not travel alone and between events Henrik worked around the clock to provide for the family and raise money for new chess trips.

The female wing of the family, Magnus' mother and three sisters, lived their normal lives in Lommedalen. Just before Christmas 2002, it was their turn to decide the travel destination. That trip went to Tenerife, a normal seaside holiday for the entire family. There aren't any other chess-free trips to record in this book. Magnus has been in a total of 20 countries in the course of his short career, but only once with a motive other than chess.

When he (finally) came home just before Christmas, it was full speed ahead on the Internet Chess Club to make up for lost time. Full of energy, he set a new personal blitz rating record with 2996 at the ICC, which is solid grandmaster level and at least Norwegian elite. Still, he did not win the first online Norwegian blitz championship arranged on the ICC on one of the last days of 2002. There was not much of a turnout and Magnus was the heavy favourite, but in the final he got sloppy and surprisingly lost to Kjetil Stokke (who uses the handle 'Styggen' – Ugly). Magnus didn't take it too seriously, and was right not to.

The Open Norwegian quick-play championship in Vikersund on the first weekend of 2003 was more serious. It was bitingly cold, about -20°C, but over 100 players had braved the weather and made their way to the site, which is best known for its ski-flying hill. This quick play tournament enjoys great prestige and is considered one of the country's major events.

The year before Magnus had taken the bronze in a very tough event. This year's field was not as dangerous, but neither was Magnus. Before, he might have been able to profit from being so small and delicate that some people underestimated him, but the situation was different now. He might still be small, but everyone knew what he could do.

Magnus lost three games and finished with 6½ out of 10, sharing 4-6 place. But

he beat me, which did not go unnoticed in the media. In my defence, I have to say that I had just had an operation on knee ligaments and according to an acupuncturist I know, the knee is on the same energy path that leads to the brain. Alternative explanations escape me...

Just two days after the Open Norwegian quick play came another edition of the Gausdal Troll Masters. Hans Olav Lahlum was not just committed to chess in Gausdal but also to Magnus. Before announcing tournaments he used to check with Magnus that he was coming. As Lahlum said in his presentation of Magnus on the tournament web page: 'He has been the main reason why I have decided to organise Gausdal tournaments in 2002 and 2003. I think it is a very good reason.'

The entire Carlsen family has thrived in Gausdal and they cannot praise Lahlum highly enough for his efforts. The Carlsen girls came along this time, and they all lived in a cabin about a kilometre from the hotel. Magnus and his father skied to and from the games.

The field was tough, but that didn't stop Magnus from broadcasting his goal of achieving an IM norm. This corresponds to a rating performance of 2450, which was by no means unthinkable taking into account his result at the World U-12 the year before. But his father wriggled a bit when it came out this way. It is fine to think like this, but saying it can suddenly create external pressures and expectations. But this was met with indulgent smiles and his ambitions were quietly played down. That Magnus would go out and make the norm was something that only he believed.

He started well enough with a first round win over a 2000 player and then a careful draw against Russian grandmaster Alexey Lugovoi (2540). The Russian said after the game that he thought he was going to win in a few moves, but shortly afterwards a draw was agreed.

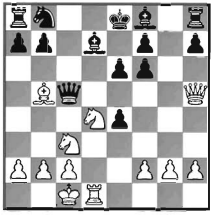
Magnus did not hide that at this time his first goal was to draw the strongest players. He needed a little time to feel his way forward, learn how strong they really were, before he would be ready to play for a win against grandmasters as well. A year later he would play hard to defeat even super-grandmasters rated over 2600.

Magnus had to bow to grandmaster Sergey Ovsejevitsch (2517) from Ukraine in round three but made up for this defeat with two consecutive wins. Against those rated below him Magnus was ruthless. This is how he handled Olaf Berg (2056) from the Faeroe Islands.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Olaf Berg**
Gausdal 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♕xd4 A varied repertoire is especially important for all ambitious players. One advantage is that it becomes more difficult for future opponents to prepare themselves to meet you, but learning new things is even more important and a good reason not to linger too long in the same old openings. **4...♘c6 5.♗b5 a6 6.♗xc6+ bxc6 7.♘c3 c5 8.♕d3 ♗b7 9.♗g5 g6 10.0-0-0 f6**

11.♗f4! This move brims with talent. It does not appear to be possible to break with the e-pawn, but Magnus has an idea. **11...♘h6**



12.e5! So this was the point after all! **12...fxe5 13.♘xe5 dxe5 14.♕e3** The point. Black must choose between sacrificing his queen or returning the piece on h6, with a ruined pawn structure. He chooses the former. **14...exf4 15.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 16.♕xf4 ♘f5** Black has plenty of material but has trouble coordinating his pieces. **17.♕a4+ ♖d7 18.♖d1 ♘d4 19.♕c4?** 19.f3 was better. **19...e6** Black could have secured an advantage with 19...♗xg2. **20.♔b1 ♗e7 21.♕a4 ♗c6** Black clearly does not want the pawn on g2. **22.♕xa6 ♔f7 23.f3** Magnus does not fall for 23.♖xd4 cxd4 24.♕xc6 dxc3 25.♕xd7 ♖d8 and White has to give up his queen to avoid mate on the back rank. **23...♖b8 24.♖e1 ♖db7 25.b3 ♖b6 26.♕d3 ♗b7 27.h4 ♗a6 28.♕e4 ♗f6 29.♕f4 ♖8b7? 30.♘e4** Now one-way traffic starts. **30...e5 31.♕h6 ♗g7 32.♕xh7 ♖b8 33.♘g5+ ♔f6 34.f4?!** 34.♖xe5 was more effective. 34...♖h8 is met by 35.♘e4+ ♔f7 36.♖e7+. **34...exf4 35.♖e7 ♔xe7 36.♕xg7+ ♔d6** Black could put up more resistance by falling back to his first rank but White should win anyway. **37.♘e4+ ♔c6 38.♕xg6+ ♔b7 39.♘xc5+ ♔a8 40.♕e4+ ♘c6 41.♘d7 ♖8b7 42.♘xb6+ ♖xb6 43.h5** White has a fearsome queen and he is about to get another. **43...♔b7 44.h6 ♔c7 45.h7 ♖b8 46.♕xf4+** Black resigned.

After a new loss in the fifth round, this time against fellow Bærum resident Helge A. Nordahl (2303), it did not look good with only 3½ out of 6. The IM norm would likely be 7 out of 10, which would mean scoring as many points in the next four rounds as he had in the first six, and he might need more.

Magnus learns quickly. In the youth championships the previous autumn he had been through some nerve-wracking tournament finishes. He had had a taste of real pressure – and he had also learned how to tackle it. The best is to push it aside, forget the situation you are in and to just play the kind of chess you like best, for the fun of it.

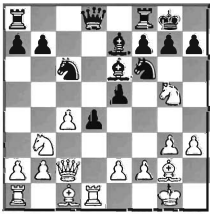
In any case, the pressure was off Magnus with four rounds to go. The IM-norm seemed to be out of reach. After a win in the seventh round Magnus still commented cheerily that he hoped that a finish of 3/3 would be enough for an IM-norm. He had enough self-irony to joke about his earlier, cocky, comments. After a draw against women's grandmaster (WGM) Tatiana Shumaikina (2364) in the eighth round there were only theoretical chances for his norm. He would not only have to win his last two games, he would also have to meet opponents with high enough ratings to raise the overall average of his opposition.

The first challenge was Bjarte Leer-Salvesen (2329), a merry theology

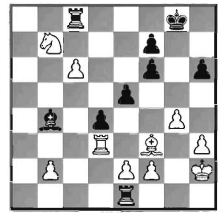
student from Kristiansand. He was also hunting an IM-norm, so this game was bound to be a fight.

□ **Bjarte Leer-Salvesen**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Gausdal 2003

1.c4 ♘f6 2.g3 e6 3.♗g2 d5 4.♘f3 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♕c2 c5 7.d4 ♘c6 In southern Norway's chess circles, where Leer-Salvesen was from, there had been quite a bit of experimenting with 7...cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘c6 9.♘xc6 bxc6. Black should not have any problems in these positions either, but Magnus wanted something a bit less explored. **8.dxc5 d4 9.♖d1 e5 10.♘bd2 ♗xc5 11.♘b3 ♗e7 12.h3** After 12.e3 ♗g4 13.exd4 Black has 13...e4! **12...♗e6 13.♘g5**



13...♘b4! At the end of a long forced sequence Magnus will emerge the exchange ahead. **14.♘xe6 ♘xc2 15.♘xd8 ♘xa1 16.♘xb7 ♘xb3 17.axb3 a5** Getting the rook active is a priority here. **18.♗g5 a4 19.bxa4 ♖xa4 20.c5 ♖c4!** A rook behind a passed pawn is always good. **21.c6 ♖c2 22.♖d2 ♖c1+ 23.♔h2 h6 24.♗xf6 gxf6** Black can not allow 24...♗xf6 25.b4 ♖b1 26.♗e4! ♖xb4 27.♖c2 and the c-pawn provides enough counterplay to draw. **25.♗e4 ♖c8 26.g4 ♗b4!** White has good pawn structure but his rook is not well placed. **27.♖d3 ♖e1 28.♗f3**



28...♖e8! Black manages to extract the most of the little advantage he has. **29.♖b3 ♗f8 30.♗e4** What else? **30...♖xe2 31.♗f5 e4! 32.c7 d3!** Black is always a step ahead. **33.♘d8** It was not possible to stop the d-pawn. **33...♗d6+** White resigned.

The last round pairings were favourable for Magnus. His opponent, Mark Bluvshtein (2461) from Canada, was just high enough rated – and just two years older than Magnus. Tournament director Lahlum could soothe Magnus by telling him he only had to beat a 14-year-old boy to make his first IM-norm.

This is a familiar situation – many people have had to win in the final round to achieve something. Most lie awake thinking about it, sleep badly and fail. Magnus was in this situation in the Youth world championship and failed. This time he would succeed.

□ **Mark Bluvshtein**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Gausdal 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.♗d3 ♗c5 6.♘b3 ♗a7 7.0-0 ♘c6

8.♕e2 d6 9.♗e3 ♗xe3 10.♕xe3 ♘f6 When White castles queenside in this type of position the knight should go to e7, but here it can safely go to f6 without fearing the advance of the g-pawn since White has castled 'short'. **11.♘1d2** The most logical way to get the biggest grip on the centre is to play 11.c4 and then 12.♘c3. From c3 the knight covers two central squares, from d2, just one. **11...0-0 12.f4 ♖b8?** It is not easy to see the point of this. 12...e5 or 12...b5 at once are more natural moves. **13.♖ae1 b5 14.e5 ♘d5 15.♕h3 g6 16.c4 bxc4 17.♗xc4** 17.♘xc4 overprotecting the vital e5 pawn looks better, but White has the advantage in either case. **17...dxe5 18.fxe5 ♔g7 19.♘e4?!** This lets Black off the hook. After 19.♔h1 Black's position is critical. **19...♘xe5! 20.♗xd5 exd5 21.♕c3 ♕b6+ 22.♖f2 dxe4** Black's solution is simple. **23.♕xe5+ ♔g8 24.♕xe4 ♗e6 25.♖e3 ♖fe8** White's attack has vanished and suddenly his position is coming apart at the seams

26.♘d4? White should have heard alarms here – all of his pieces are now very exposed. **26...♖bd8 27.♖d2 f5 28.♕d3 ♖d6** Magnus builds up more threats before taking the a-pawn. **29.♔h1 ♖c8 30.h3** On 30.♖xe6 Black has the neat 30...♖xd4! with mate motifs on the back rank. **30...♗xa2 31.♕a3** After 31.b3 ♖c1+ 32.♔h2 Black's bishop can always escape via b1. **31...♗f7** Magnus can retreat with an extra pawn and a continuing initiative. **32.♖ed3 ♖c1+ 33.♔h2 ♕b8! 34.♖g3 h5 35.h4**

35...♕d8! This is the kind of thing that can happen when you scatter your forces and ignore Nimzowitsch's rule about the overprotection of vulnerable pieces. **36.♘e6 ♕xh4+ 37.♖h3 ♖h1+! 38.♔xh1 ♕e1+ 39.♔h2 ♕xd2 40.♘g5 h4** 40...♕f4++ is simpler. **41.♖f3 ♖b6 42.♕e7 ♕d6+ 43.♕xd6 ♖xd6 44.♘xf7 ♔xf7 45.♖f4 ♖b6 46.b4 ♔e6** The h-pawn is not important. **47.♖xh4 ♔d5 48.♔g3 g5 49.♖h1 ♔c4!** Perhaps the most precise. **50.♖f1 ♖f6 51.♖b1 ♖e6 52.♖f1 ♖f6 53.♖b1 ♔b5 54.♖b3 ♖e6 55.♔f2 ♖e4 56.♖d3 ♔xb4 57.♖d5 a5 58.g3 a4 59.♖xf5 a3 60.♔f3 ♖c4 61.♔e2 a2 62.♖f1 ♔c3 63.♖c1+ ♔b3** White resigned.

Magnus' father had to return home before the others and was sitting at work during the decisive hours of this game. The news that Magnus had made the norm came via a colleague who had been following the action on the Internet. One often hears horror stories about parents that push

their children and examples where tiny children are screamed forward on the football pitch by overeager parents. That is not at all the case with the Carlsens. Magnus has been watched but never pressured. If anything, the opposite is true, with his family holding back while Magnus wanted to play more and more. Magnus has always been told that it didn't matter how he did. But at moments like this a father could feel giddy with joy, and it would not be the first time his son's leaps of success would surprise him.

Magnus seemed oblivious to the congratulations raining down on him. He was most interested in playing blitz with Kjetil Stokke (Styggen) and his contemporary Jon Ludvig Hammer. It was clear nevertheless that this result had changed something about Magnus. Before, he had had problems playing under pressure. Now this barrier had been broken.

Next on the tournament agenda was supposed to be the Open Norwegian Junior championship two and a half months later, but this was far too long for Magnus to wait. In desperation the Internet was combed for tournament announcements. They found the Open Valle d'Aosta in St. Vincent in the far north of Italy, on a 500-metre high peak by a slope at the foot of a magnificent Alpine landscape. It sounded exciting for nature-lovers Magnus and Henrik, and the tournament was strong.

There were 39 grandmasters in the 212-player field. Highest ranked were Zurab Azmaiparashvili (2678) from Georgia, Victor Kortchnoi (2642) from Switzerland and Sergey Tiviakov (2635) from the Netherlands. It would be great fun just to stroll around in the same room as these guys.

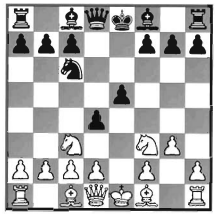
It was also fun to see the world's oldest active grandmaster, Enrico Paoli, born in 1908. True, he was now rated no more than a bit over 1900, but a character like this says a bit about how broad the chess community is.

Magnus was ranked 87th and ended up in 73rd place with 5 points and a rating performance of 2357. Fine, but this tournament had yo-yoed at first, with wins with white over players around 2000 followed by losses with black to players 2400 or above. The finish was better, with draws against grandmasters Igor Naumkin (2412) from Russia and Antoaneta Stefanova (2560) from Bulgaria. At that time Stefanova was the second highest ranked woman player in the world, behind Judit Polgar, but then hit a long bad patch and lost nearly 100 points. Now she's back and in the summer of 2004 she became FIDE women's world champion.

A few rounds earlier Magnus had received rough treatment at the hands of another woman player, international master Elena Sedina (2425) from Italy. Magnus had prepared a lot, including a call home to Norway to talk to Kjetil Stokke. He had planned a variation where Black sacrifices a knight as early as move four but was a bit put off when Sedina calmly returned the piece two moves later. By a transposition of moves they were back in known theory, which was not the idea at all.

□ **Elena Sedina**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
St. Vincent 2003

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.g3 ♘xe4 5.♘xe4 d5 6.♘c3 d4



7.♗g2!? A practical decision. White should really fight to keep the extra piece when Black gets strong counterplay but Sedina knows the smell of home preparation. **7...dxc3 8.bxc3** The normal way of reaching this position is 4..d5 5.exd5 ♘xd5 6.♗g2 ♘xc3 7.bxc3. **8...♗d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖b1 ♖b8 11.d4 ♗g4** It is simpler to take on d4 first. Now Magnus is drawn into a long forced sequence ending in a white advantage. **12.h3 ♗h5** There was still time to retreat in the other direction. **13.g4 ♗g6 14.dxe5! ♘xe5 15.♘xe5 ♗xe5 16.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 17.f4!** Coolly played. **17...♗xc2 18.♖b2 ♗d3 19.fxe5 ♗xf1 20.♗xf1 b6** Black is doing fine materially but soon the bishop pair will dominate. **21.♔f2 ♖d5 22.♗f4 ♖bd8 23.♗e2 h6 24.h4 ♔f8 25.h5 ♖c5 26.♖c2 ♖a5 27.♔e3 ♖c5 28.♔e4 ♖e8 29.♔f3 ♖e6 30.a4 c6 31.♗d3 ♖a5 32.♗f5 ♖e7 33.♖d2 ♖d5** After 33...♖xa4 34.e6! is nasty. **34.♖d4 ♖e8 35.♗e4 ♖c5 36.c4 ♔g8 37.♗f5 a6 38.♗d7 ♖a8 39.e6 fxe6 40.♗d6!** The end is near. **♖a5 41.♗xc6 ♖a7 42.♗b4 ♖g5 43.♖d8+ ♔h7 44.♗e4+ g6 45.hxg6+ ♔g7 46.♗f8+ ♔f6 47.♗xh6** Black resigned.

Magnus had a large contingent of little girls as spectators during the Norwegian championship in Røros in 2001 and he has three sisters but at the chessboard he has not met too many girls. The chess world is quite male-dominated and there are even fewer women at the level Magnus is now. Judit Polgar, who is one of the world elite regardless of gender is still a few notches above him.

Magnus and his father also found time to take some hikes in the mountains when they were in northern Italy. Especially the Matterhorn, which stretches like a sharp pyramid from 3,000-4,500 meters height, was an experience, even if they had to content themselves with just seeing it from a distance this time. Besides, they found two good restaurants, so Magnus was content.

At home there was a sponsorship deal ready for them. None other than Microsoft was willing to go in with the same amount Computas had the year before. My brother Espen had used his contacts to arrange this deal. The obligations for Magnus were far less than with Computas, he really had to do nothing in return. Microsoft donates money to charity and before the agreement we had heard that their choice was between Magnus and a handicapped choir – in the end they gave money to both causes. The era of charitable sponsors is not yet over. Magnus was not a cheap son with all of his travels and hotel bills, so assistance of this type has been profoundly important.

A few weeks later Magnus gave a simultaneous exhibition against 18 players at his father's former club, Tønsberg. Except for a year's interlude in Finland Magnus spent the first six and a half years of his life in this beautiful city on the west side of the

Oslo Fjord, an hour and a half's drive south of the capital.

Magnus has had many offers to give simultaneous exhibitions since but has by and large declined. An attractive fee does not change his mind – he just doesn't like the fuss around him. Planning and sealing long-range deals is also not really something for small boys. So Magnus has generally been able to decide this for himself – even if the money could certainly have been useful on all their trips. There are perhaps some who could be tempted to exploit Magnus' market value, but the family has handled this consistently – the little boy comes first, and after all, that is what Magnus finally is.

They learned a bit when a shopping centre the year before, when Magnus was just eleven, offered NOK 5,000 (almost 600 Euro) to the first player who managed to beat him in a simultaneous against over 20 players. In retrospect his father doubted the wisdom of this – a little boy should not have this kind of pressure on his shoulders. The amount may not have been much for a shopping centre, but for Magnus it was enormous.

Small boys are also not tempted by magnificent cultural experiences. Just mentioning the subject clearly gives Magnus chills down his spine. Not even a trip to China appealed. Just before Easter a gang from the NTG crowd were invited on a reciprocal visit to the Hebei province. The Chinese who had visited us the autumn before had really gone to lengths to make the Norwegian trip there an unforgettable experience. We were tended to with receptions and dinners and dignitaries and stellar hotels from the minute we touched down in Beijing until we returned, in awe, ten days later. This was a cultural experience, from start to finish.

We would liked to have had Magnus with us, but he much preferred another trip to Gausdal and another edition of Gausdal Classics. Lahlum was not sure if he could hold the event that year but when Magnus said he would happily drop the China trip for it, he got down to business. There was no longer any discussion about Magnus entering the GM-group, with a total of 12 players and a rating average of 2436. There was no fear of failure any more. At the same time there were two other events, an IM-norm group and a FIDE rating section.

For a change Magnus started like a bullet with a fine win in the first round against Colm Daly (2353) from Ireland.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Colm Daly**
Gausdal 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗e3 ♘f6 7.f4 ♗e7 8.♕f3 0-0 9.0-0-0 ♕c7 10.♘b3?! There was no reason to retreat. After the superior 10.g4! ♘xd4 White can recapture with either piece: 11.♗xd4 e5 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.♕g3 is fine, as is 11.♖xd4 e5 12.♖c4. **10...a6 11.g4 b5 12.g5 ♘d7 13.h4 ♗b7**

14.g6! Success means attacking first and Magnus invests a pawn to get started. **14...♘b4?** This is completely irrelevant. 14...hxg6 15.h5 g5 was possible but most testing was 14...fxg6. The e-pawn can be protected by ♘c6-d8 and Black has plenty of counterplay. Sometimes Magnus can be a bit reckless with such intuitive sacrifices, something good defenders can punish. **15.a3 ♘c6 16.♗h3** With two extra moves the attack is, unsurprisingly, venomous. **16...hxg6 17.h5 g5 18.f5 ♘ce5 19.♕g3 g4 20.♗xg4 ♘xg4**

21.h6?! Magnus always seeks the brilliant and often succeeds, but 21.♕xg4 was much simpler. **21...g5** After 21...♘de5 22.hxg7 ♔xg7 23.♗f4 exf5 24.♘d4 White gets a vicious attack. **22.♕xg4 ♘e5 23.♕h5 g4 24.♗d4 ♗f6 25.♗xe5!** Here Magnus does choose the simple route. **25...♗xe5 26.♕xg4+ ♔h8 27.♖dg1** Black can not prevent 28.♕g7+ and so he resigned.

Next up was German women's grandmaster Elisabeth Pähtz (2384).

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Elisabeth Pähtz**
Gausdal 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e5 5.♘b5 d6 6.♘1c3 a6 7.♘a3 b5 8.♘d5 ♘f6 9.♘xf6+ 9.♗g5 transposes to the Sveshnikov Variation, but Magnus does not back down from unorthodox complications. **9...♕xf6 10.c4 b4 11.♘c2 ♕g6 12.♕d5 ♗b7 13.♘xb4 ♘d8** Shirov chose 13...♖c8 against Anand in Linares 2002, but after that game the text move was proposed as an improvement. **14.♕d1 ♕xe4+ 15.♗e3 ♗e7 16.♘d5 ♗h4 17.♕d3 ♕xd3 18.♗xd3 ♘e6 19.0-0 ♖c8 20.b4 e4 21.♗e2 ♗f6** A surprising move, but Black has problems finding active squares for his pieces. **22.♘xf6+ gxf6 23.♖ac1 f5 24.f4 exf3** Else Black will not be able to find activity. **25.♗xf3 ♗e4 26.♗xe4** It may be illogical to correct Black's pawn structure but Magnus is more concerned with getting room for his pieces. Besides, the queenside pawns are ready to march. **26...fxe4 27.♖f5 ♖f8 28.a4 ♔e7 29.b5 axb5 30.axb5 ♘g7 31.♖d5 ♘e6 32.♖f5 ♘g7**

33.♖f2! Magnus does not want a draw by repetition of moves. The bishop on e3 is much stronger than the knight. **33...♘e6 34.b6! f5 35.g3 ♔d7 36.♖b2 ♖b8 37.b7!** The passed pawn decides the game. **37...♘d8 38.♖cb1 ♘c6 39.♗f4! ♖fe8 40.c5 ♘e5 41.♖c2! dxc5 42.♖xc5 ♘d3 43.♗xb8 ♘xc5 44.♗f4 ♘a6 45.b8♕**

♘xb8 46.♖xb8 ♖xb8 47.♗xb8 ♔e6 48.♔f2 ♔f6 49.h4 Black resigned. A fine technical game by Magnus.

Elisabeth Pähtz was at this time Leif Erlend Johannessen's girlfriend. I was sharing a room with Leif Erlend in China and from the rapid exchange of mobile phone text messages I could understand that Elisabeth didn't like losing to a little boy.

Draws in the next two rounds against grandmasters Heikki Westerinen (2360) from Finland and Alexey Lugovoi (2563) from Russia were also uplifting results for Magnus. He needed 5 out of 9, 5½ out of 10 or 6 out of 11 to get a new IM-norm and in China we had no doubt that he was going to make it with a 3 out of 4 start.

But then came a near total collapse. Magnus lost his next four games. His opposition was strong, but this had more to do with Magnus. It was the same old problem – Magnus was tired. The familiar late first round and two double round days made this tournament even more gruelling. Magnus began to play very long and draining games ... and there were blitz and team blitz events after the rounds that lasted into late evening.

With his unshakeable thirst for chess Magnus had to play everything. The rational thing to do was reload for the more important international event, but Magnus didn't think like this. His parents didn't want to get in the way of his obvious desire, but the team blitz convinced his father to intervene.

This form of chess is amusing. There are three players on each team and each match takes place over six boards. The players have to run around making moves and cooperation and discussion within the team are allowed. The games are understandably hectic with only five minutes per side per match.

In one match Magnus suddenly stopped and stood still, swaying by one board, eyes glassy and staring sightless for over a minute. He didn't notice that his time was running out and Henrik understood that Magnus had had more than enough. Magnus was exhausted and nearly in a trance. His father resolutely took him out of the tournament, two rounds before the end, and put him to bed, the time already over 11 p.m.

Magnus was also short on sleep for another reason. The entire family was staying in the same cabin they had the time before. But when his sisters went to bed at a normal time Magnus wanted to lie awake at night and read chess books. So he went out to the living room in order not to disturb the others. The problem then was that he was woken when the others got up early the next morning to eat breakfast.

Magnus managed to avoid a total fiasco with draws in the ninth and tenth rounds, but in the eleventh he lost again. His rating performance was still 2334, so it was no disaster.

His parents had doubts about letting Magnus compete in the Open Norwegian Junior championship that began in Oslo the day after Gausdal, and lasted a week. Of course Magnus wanted to play, and perhaps even more, to be in the company of friends his own age. He is always young at chess events, but junior events give him a break from the vast age gap.

Thinking that the opposition in Oslo would be considerably 'lighter' than in Gausdal and thus the games shorter, his parents eventually let him play. Magnus showed his thanks by scoring seven straight wins against opposition averaging about 2100. He was in a class of his own and he also avenged his loss against Øystein Bøyum Fossum (2073), who had beaten him in the NTG Grand Prix not long before.

□ **Øystein Bøyum Fossum**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2003

1.b3 ♘f6 2.♗b2 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d6 6.d4 c5 7.dxc5?! 7.♘f3 gives a normal position. **7...♕a5+ 8.♕d2 ♕xc5 9.e4 ♘c6 10.♘e2?** White is oblivious to danger.

10...♗h3! An icy shower to start the day. After 11.♗xh3 Black wins at once with 11...♘xe4 12.♕c2 ♗xb2 13.♕xb2 ♘xf2!. **11.b4** Hoping to complicate, but Magnus has full control. **11...♕xc4 12.♘a3 ♘xe4** This looks complicated, but it clears up quickly. **13.♘xc4 ♘xd2 14.♗xc6 ♘xc4 15.♗xg7 ♔xg7 16.♗xb7 ♖ab8 17.♗d5 ♖xb4 18.♘f4 ♗f5 19.a3 ♖a4** The smoke lifts and Black has two extra pawns. Fossum didn't need to see Magnus' technique and resigned.

The only opponent that stayed on the board was Carl Fredrik Ekeberg (2227), his old training partner from NTG. They met in the sixth and penultimate round. Magnus led the field by a full point and offered a draw at one point to ensure at least a share of first place.

□ **Carl Fredrik Ekeberg**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Oslo 2003

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘h5 Magnus is inspired by IM Eirik Gullaksen, foreman of Bergen's chess club, who has this unusual move in his repertoire. **8.g3 ♗g4** 8...♗h3 is more common. **9.♗g5 f6 10.♗e3 ♘c6 11.d5 ♘e7 12.♕d2 ♕d7 13.♘e1 ♗xe2 14.♕xe2 f5 15.exf5 ♘xf5 16.♘e4 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3 ♘f6 18.♘d3 c6 19.dxc6 ♕xc6 20.♘xf6+ ♖xf6 21.♖ac1 ♖f3 22.♕e2 ♖af8 23.♘b4 ♕c5 24.♘d5**

24...e4! White has a fine steed on d5, but it would be even stronger on e4. Magnus manages to drum up counterplay before White gets to re-route the knight. **25.b4**

♕d4 26.♘e3 h5 27.♖cd1 ♕e5 28.♖d5 ♕e6 29.♘d1 An odd retreat of the knight but Black's pressure against f2 is bothersome. **29...h4 30.♖e1 hxg3 31.hxg3 ♕h3!** Magnus has no intention of passive defence with 31...♖e8. **32.♕xe4**

32...♖xg3+! 33.fxg3 ♕xg3+ 34.♔h1 ♖f4! Magnus wants the whole point. **35.♕xf4 ♕xf4** White's pieces lack coordination while Black is ready to reinforce the attack with ♗g7-e5. **36.♖e8+ ♔f7 37.♖c8** White has no defence. **37...♕f1+ 38.♔h2 ♗e5+ 39.♖xe5 dxe5 40.♖d8 ♕f4+ 41.♔h3 ♕f3+ 42.♔h2 ♕h5+** 0-1 The rook on d8 also falls after a queen check on g5 next move.

So Magnus had won the event with a round to spare and could chase a perfect score in the final round without inhibition. On the evening of the last two rounds he also 'had to' fit in the Tiger quick play Grand Prix, one of the many tournaments running in parallel with the main events of the Easter festival, the Open Norwegian and Open Norwegian Junior championships. The time limit was 25 minutes per person per game and Magnus' form continued. He won the event, ahead of GMs Leif Erlend Johannessen and Normunds Miezis from Latvia.

These were impressive results, especially bearing in mind his fatigue in Gausdal just before. To be able to reset after a mistake or defeat is an invaluable ability for a top sportsman. Unless your name is Garry Kasparov you are going to take some knocks from time to time. The trick is to get back up and act like nothing happened. Magnus can do this.

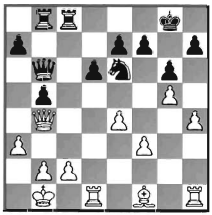
The gap between Magnus and other players his age in Norway was now enormous, and so his appearance in a children's event in Smestad in mid-May caused some sensation. These are normally for beginners and novices, but little sister Ingrid, 8, was going to play and Magnus, being a sociable type, thought it could be fun to be with chess players of his age group. But it could never be completely 'normal', he had been a star for some time now and was viewed as one. It was not so easy to just slip into the crowd and be 'one of the boys'.

It also isn't easy to play against guys that he regarded as big stars when he was even smaller. He found this out in the Norwegian team championship final in the end of May. Asker chess club had won the two previous years and now wanted to repeat the performance on their home turf, with Magnus on third board behind two GMs, Berge Østenstad and Jonathan Tisdall.

Magnus did fine, with four draws and one win, but winning the event requires a little extra. The little things did not go Asker's way this time and they had to settle for bronze. Magnus did get a chance to show how dangerous he was against Dagfinn Snarheim (2216) from Hauge.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Dagfinn Snarheim**
Asker 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0 ♘xd4 10.♗xd4 ♗e6 11.g4?! Magnus himself pointed out that this is imprecise. After 11.♔b1! ♕a5 doesn't work because of 12.♘d5 and the trading of queens is answered by a capture on e7. Black therefore must first play 11...♕c7 and 12...♖fc8 and only then 13...♕a5. After 14.♘d5 Black can safely trade queens since the intermediate capture on e7 is met by ♔f8. **11...♕a5 12.♔b1 ♖fc8 13.a3 ♖ab8 14.♘e2** An admission that White has played inaccurately. **14...♕a4** The endgame should hold no fears for Black. **15.g5 ♘h5 16.♗xg7 ♘xg7 17.♘d4 b5 18.♕b4 ♕a6** Black believes he can win by attack. The ending was still fine for Black. **19.♘xe6 ♘xe6 20.h4 ♕b6**



21.h5! Magnus finally gets real attacking chances going. A few pawns hanging here and there is not a major concern for Magnus. **21...♕f2 22.♗d3** 22...♕xf3 was also possible. After 23.hxg6 Black must recapture with the h-pawn since 23...fxg6 is answered by 24.♕b3, but there is still much to do before White's attack breaks through. **22...♘xg5 23.hxg6 hxg6 24.e5! ♘xf3** After 24...dxe5 25.♕xe7 ♘xf3 White wins with 26.♗xg6. **25.exd6 exd6 26.♕f4! b4 27.♕h6 ♕d4 28.♗xg6 ♕g7 29.♗h7+ ♔h8 30.♕xd6 bxa3 31.♕xa3 ♖c3 32.♗g6+ ♔g8 33.♗xf7+!** There are still tricks left. **33...♔xf7 34.♕xa7+ ♔f6 35.♖d6+ ♔f5 36.♕xg7** The last in a series of powerful queen moves. 1-0

Magnus had produced an excellent result in Gothenburg at this time the year before. When now an invitation turned up to take part in the ten-man Salongernas IM-tournament, average rating 2346, in Stockholm it set off good vibrations. Magnus had played a lot of football recently and seemed quick and fit, so his parents once again let Magnus have his way.

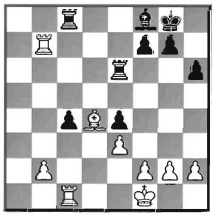
His maternal grandfather accompanied him the first half week and his father took over for the rest of the event. They lived at the new, functional but somewhat sterile, tin can of a hotel called the Formula 1. Magnus was highly satisfied to learn there was a football field for him to romp on nearby.

The tournament began brightly with a win over the top seed in the group, IM Jens Ove Fries-Nielsen (2448) from Denmark.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Jens Ove Fries-Nielsen**
Stockholm 2003

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.d4 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 b6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.♗d3 ♗b7 9.0-0 c5 10.♘e5 ♘c6 11.dxc5

11.♕f3 is more aggressive. **11...♘xe5 12.♗xe5 bxc5** Black has a healthy position with 'hanging pawns' on c5 and d5 and does not stand worse. **13.♕b3 ♕b6 14.♖fd1 c4** It seems strange to take on a backward pawn on d5, but the weakness is easy to defend. **15.♕xb6 axb6 16.♗e2 ♖a5 17.♖ab1 ♗c6 18.♗f3 h6 19.a3 ♖c8 20.♔f1 ♘e4 21.♗g4 ♖e8 22.♘xe4 dxe4 23.♗c3 ♖a7 24.♖d2 b5 25.♖bd1 ♖b7 26.♗d7 ♗xd7 27.♖xd7 ♖b6 28.♗d4 ♖bb8 29.♗a7 ♖bc8 30.♗d4 b4** A repetition of moves is most reasonable. **31.axb4 ♗xb4 32.♖c1 ♖e6 33.♖b7 ♗f8**



34.b4! Magnus has been content with a draw the whole way, but now sees the sudden presence of possibilities to get more. **34...♖a6 35.b5 ♖a3 36.b6** Combined with the titan on d4 this passed pawn becomes a decisive factor. **36...c3 37.♖c7 ♖b8 38.♖7xc3 ♖aa8 39.♖b1 ♖b7 40.♖c7 ♖ab8 41.♖xb7 ♖xb7 42.♖a1!** Simple and good. Black gave up before Magnus could complete the manoeuvre ♖a7, ♖d7, b7 and ♗a7.

Against Swede Dennis Rylander (2348) Magnus got to show how good he would be. Here he displays wonderful attacking play with a light-hearted introductory bishop sacrifice.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Dennis Rylander**
Stockholm 2003

1.d4 f5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 g6 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.♘c3 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e5 9.♘xe5 dxe5 10.e4 f4 11.gxf4 If Rylander was thinking of surprising Magnus with a rare variation he was thoroughly mistaken. Already a year earlier a group of NTG students had concluded that White could escape perpetual check in the long variation 11...♘h5 12.fxe5 ♗xe5 13.♘e2 ♕d6 14.f4 ♘xf4 15.♘xf4 ♗xf4 16.♗xf4 ♖xf4 17.♖xf4 ♕xf4 18.♕d+ e5 19.♕c5 b6 20.♕c6 ♕e3+ 21.♔h1 ♗h3 22.♕xa8+ ♔g7 23.♗xh3 ♕xh3 24.♕c6. This is not all forced but it is an important variation for the evaluation of Black's opening. In old theory books Black is supposed to draw after 21...♗h3, but this is not correct. **11...exf4 12.e5 ♘g4 13.e6 ♘e5 14.c5** The right move here is supposed to be 14.♖e1 with the point 14...♘xc4 15.♖e4 followed by taking on f4. **14...f3 15.♗h3 g5** A known idea. **16.♔h1!?** After 16.♗xg5 ♕e8 is critical for White. Instead, Magnus calmly sacrifices a piece. **16...g4 17.♕d4 gxh3**

18.♗h6! Magnus has won some brilliant games – this is one of them. **18...♗xh6**

19.♕xe5 ♖f6 20.♖g1+ ♖g6 21.♕h5 ♔g7 22.♖xg6+ hxg6 23.♖g1 ♕e8 24.♘e4 c6 25.♕e5+ ♔g8 26.♘g5 White wants more than a draw by repetition with 26.♕h5. **26...♗xg5** It is not easy to defend the black position but after this he is definitely lost. **27.♕xg5 ♔g7**

28.♖g4! White has enough material left to mate. **28...♗xe6 29.♕e5+ ♔g8 30.♖h4** Mate is inevitable. **30...♗xd5 31.♖h8+ ♔f7 32.♖h7+ ♔f8 33.♕g7** Mate. Magnus used just an hour on the game, Rylander two.

Going into the last round Magnus needed only a draw to reach the IM-norm of 6 out of 9 and take his second such result. His opponent was a smiling women's IM from the Çzech Republic, Gabriela Hitzgerova (2195), who noted that the previous time they met, two years earlier, Magnus was rated 200 points below her – now he was 200 points above.

Magnus wanted to play for a win but when the draw offer came after just nine moves and five minutes, he chose, much to the relief of nervous fans watching, to accept. The second IM-norm was in the box.

Even if I had trained with Magnus for several years I had not seen him in action very often. Magnus usually travelled to tournaments with his father and I was seldom along. But in the Barents championship in Alta, which started four days after his success in Stockholm, we even stayed in the same cabin.

Along with the former deputy secretary general for the Norwegian Chess Federation, Torstein Bae, we were invited up by the skilled organisers and all 'guests of honour' were housed in the same cottage. A bit humbler lodgings than grandmasters were used to perhaps, but very pleasant. And the location was lovely, on the banks of the Alta, the famous salmon river that was the centre of controversy in the end of the 1970s because part of it was laid in pipes and used to create hydroelectric power.

We began our stay with a fine trip up the river, in gorgeous weather and under the midnight sun. It did end quite late and was hardly the best preparation for Magnus. In the two first rounds, played the day after the boat trip, he seemed tired and uninspired and narrowly escaped with two draws against presumably weaker opponents. After a good night's sleep a new Magnus awoke, and in the last four rounds he played well and won all of his games.

Against Alf Roger Andersen (2165) from Alta Magnus displayed his positional understanding.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Alf Roger Andersen
Alta 2003

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♘f3 d6 5.♗e3 b5 6.♗d3 ♘d7 7.♕d2 ♘b6 8.b3

♗g4 9.♘g1 You have to be good to make moves like this. **9...d5 10.e5 h5 11.h3 ♗c8 12.f4 ♘h6** There are many who like this kind of structure on the kingside, but to me this just looks like White has an overwhelming space advantage. The queenside pawn structure doesn't help Black's cause. **13.♘f3 a5 14.0-0 ♘f5 15.♗f2 e6 16.a4 b4 17.♘e2 ♗f8**

18.♗xf5! A mature assessment. White can also assault the kingside by advancing his g-pawn – not at once since (after 18.g4) 18...hxg4 19.hxg4 ♘h6 the g-pawn cannot be protected – but after calm preparation. **18...gxf5** It is logical to capture towards the centre, but in the long run the h-pawn is a weakness. **19.♗h4 ♕c7 20.♖fc1 ♗a6 21.c3!** White has the best structure on both flanks. **21...♖c8 22.♗e1 ♗e7 23.cxb4 axb4 24.♗h4 ♗f8** Black can not allow the exchange of bishops considering the weakness of b4. **25.♘e1 ♘d7 26.♘d3 ♕b6 27.♗f2** Black's only counterplay lies in the break c6-c5, so White devotes resources to hinder this. **27...♗e7 28.♖c2 ♕b7 29.♔h2 ♔f8 30.♖ac1 ♔g7 31.♘g1!** All pieces seek out their optimum posts. **31...♔h6 32.♘f3 ♖c7 33.♗h4 ♗xh4** Black's king is also exposed after 33...♗f8. **34.♘xh4 ♗xd3** After 34...♖b8 35.♘c5 the black bishop is aimed at thin air. **35.♕xd3 ♖hc8** After 35...♖g8 White can start by putting a knight on g5. **36.♕g3! c5 37.♕g5+ ♔h7 38.♕xh5+ ♔g7 39.g4! ♖g8** The attack also crashes through after 39...cxd4 40.♖g2. **40.gxf5 ♔f8 41.♕h6+ ♔e7 42.fxe6** Black resigned.

The chess community in northern Norway may not be so large but just over the border, in Russian Murmansk, strong players can be found in abundance. The city is about as big as Norway's capital, but with Russian chess traditions. Valentina Gunina, nearly two years older than Magnus and a world champion in an age group, comes from here, as does grandmaster Dennis Evseev, who eventually moved to St. Petersburg and became city champion there once.

On the other hand, Russians tend to be short of money. Norwegians have more of this, so tournaments in Finnmark County nearly always feature a contingent of invited Russians who have their expenses covered. They had tales to take home after seeing Magnus Carlsen. The last two rounds were a Russian round dance with Magnus leading. First up was Alexander Sjkadiuk.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Alexander Sjkadiuk**
Alta 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.d3 ♗g7 6.h3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♗e3 b6 9.♕d2 ♖e8 Black must sooner or later play e7-e5. It was already possible since Black doesn't really need to worry about the trade of the dark-squared bishops. **10.♗h6 ♗h8 11.0-0-0 a5** This was

the last chance to establish a foothold in the centre with e7-e5. **12.e5!** ♘**d5 13.**♘**e4 f6 14.h4** An obvious move for an aggressive soul. **14...**♗**g4 15.c4** ♘**c7 16.**♕**f4** ♗**xf3 17.**♕**xf3** As usual Magnus shows no concern for a measly pawn when he gets the chance to attack. **17...f5 18.**♘**g5** It may have been more precise to retreat to c3. White gets to break up Black's kingside with the h-pawn first, followed by the g-pawn and doesn't need the knight in the attack. **18...**♗**xe5 19.h5** ♕**d4 20.**♕**e2** ♗**f4+ 21.**♔**b1 e5 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.**♕**f3** ♕**d6**

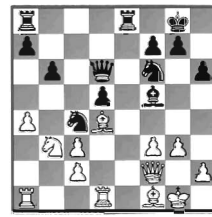
24.g4! The black king is quickly disrobed. **24...**♕**f6 25.**♘**h7!** ♕**e6 26.**♗**xf4 exf4 27.**♕**xf4** ♖**e7 28.gxf5** ♕**xf5 29.**♘**f6+** Magnus has seen a forced win. **29...**♔**f7 30.**♖**h7+** ♔**xf6 31.**♕**h4+!** ♕**g5 32.**♕**xg5+** ♔**xg5 33.**♖**xe7** The extra material and an enduring advantage in activity spell an easy win for White. **33...**♖**c8 34.**♖**de1** ♔**f6 35.**♖**d7** ♔**f5 36.**♖**f7+** ♔**g5 37.**♖**g1+** ♔**h6 38.f4** Black resigned.

The classic textbooks advise that one must always have a plan. But if you examine modern grandmaster games these can often be difficult to spot, even afterwards. While the older generation, the one led by former world champion Anatoly Karpov and the stars of the 1970s and before, may have had a more static playing style, today's top chess is more concerned with piece activity and dynamics. 'They just play and keep things going' is something Magnus and I have discussed in our training sessions.

In the final round in Alta against IM Gennady Kiselev (2437) Magnus produced this type of game, where he just sets out his pieces where they belong and then waits for opportunity to knock. Then he strikes like a cobra. I, for one, was very impressed.

□ **Gennady Kiselev**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Alta 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘**f3 e6 3.**♘**c3** ♘**c6 4.d4 cxd4 5.**♘**xd4** ♘**f6 6.g3** ♗**c5 7.**♘**b3** ♗**b4 8.**♗**g2 0-0 9.0-0** ♗**xc3 10.bxc3 d5 11.exd5 exd5** The pawn structure is strange. White has the bishop pair and good control of the square in front of Black's isolated pawn, but he doesn't have so much to do. **12.**♗**e3** ♗**g4 13.f3** ♖**e8 14.**♕**d2** ♗**f5 15.**♖**fe1** ♘**e5 16.**♗**d4** ♘**c4 17.**♕**f2 b6 18.a4** ♕**d6 19.**♗**f1 h6 20.**♖**ed1**



20...♗**g6!** The way that Magnus calmly improves his position is instructive. First

he safeguards his bishop so that he can meet 21.♗xf6 with 21...♕xf6 22.♖xd5 ♕xc3. **21.♘d2 ♘e5** The exchange of knights eases Black's position. **22.♖a2 ♘c6 23.♗b5 ♖e6 24.♗xc6** This signals that White does not have big ambitions. White has a nice bishop on d4 but not much else to cheer about. **24...♕xc6 25.♕f1 ♖ae8 26.♕b5 ♕c8!** Now opportunities appear on the light squares around the white king. **27.♔f2 ♖6e7 28.♖aa1 ♕h3 29.♘f1**

29...♘e4+! Combinations like these only turn up after thorough positional preparation. **30.fxe4 ♗xe4** The white king is in mortal danger. **31.♗e3 ♕g2+ 32.♔e1 ♗f3 33.♕d3 ♖xe3+!** Elegant to the end. **34.♘xe3 ♕xh2 35.♖db1** And here the Russian lost on time before Magnus managed to relieve White of material with 35...♕xg3+ or the more controlled 35...♕g1+ 36.♔d2 ♕f2+ 37.♖xe3.

And so Magnus and I tied for first. I also ceded two draws but was named winner on tie-break since my opponents had scored better than his.

The annual Norwegian championships in the first week of the national summer holiday season is undoubtedly the country's major event. Most of Norway's active players make the trip if they can, and in Fredrikstad 2003 no fewer than 630 players competed in 15 classes.

Of the 20 participants Magnus was ranked number seven and he made it clear early that his ambitions concerned the top spot. In the first round he smashed former Olympic team member Stig Gabrielsen (2269) in just 18 moves.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Stig Gabrielsen**
Fredrikstad 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.b3 b6 4.d4 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♗b7 6.♕e2!? 6.♗d3 is more usual. **6...♘c6 7.♘xc6 dxc6 8.♗b2 ♗b4+ 9.♘d2 ♘f6 10.0-0-0 ♕c7 11.♘c4?! b5?** Magnus did not calculate so carefully on his last move. After 11...♕f4+ 12.♔b1 ♕xe4 it just looks like Black has won a pawn. **12.e5?!** Again Magnus is sloppy. After 12...bxc4 13.exf6 c3! 14.♗a1 ♕f4+ 15.♔b1 ♕xf6 16.♕c4 ♕e7 the position is roughly equal. With 12.♗e5 followed by 13.♘d6+ White could have secured an advantage. **12...♘d5? 13.♘d6+!** Now Magnus gets what he wants. **13...♗xd6 14.exd6 ♕xd6 15.♗xg7 ♖g8 16.♗e5 ♕a3+ 17.♗b2** Setting a trap. **17...♕xa2?** Gabrielsen has not seen what is coming.

18.♖xd5! And Black resigned. After 18...cxd5 19.♕xb5+ the bishop on b7 falls.

In the next round Magnus lost to Berge Østenstad, new GM and Norwegian championship specialist. Berge went on to win the tournament and his sixth national title. For Magnus, the tournament proceeded quietly with a few too many draws. It was not until the sixth round that he could cash in his next full point, against the previous year's national junior champion Espen Lie. Two rounds later Kristian Trygstad (2330) bit the dust.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Kristian Trygstad**
Fredrikstad 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♕c7 7.a3 ♘xe4!? Black wins a pawn but it costs time and development. **8.♘xe4 ♕e5 9.♗d3** White can hold onto the pawn with 9.f3 f5 10.♕d3, but that is not Magnus' style. **9...♕xd4 10.0-0 f5** Black has several options but White leads in development nevertheless. **11.♗e3 ♕e5** Black could have taken on b2 as well as long as he was grabbing things. Then at least he has a bit more for his troubles. **12.f4 ♕c7 13.♘g5 ♗c5 14.♕h5+ g6 15.♕e2 ♕b6 16.♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 17.♔h1 ♘c6 18.b4 ♕f8** There is no longer any doubt that White has compensation for the pawn. **19.♕b2 h6 20.♘f3 ♖g8 21.b5 ♘d8** What a tragic sight on Black's back rank! His only comfort is that he has no direct weaknesses – it is not easy for White to find a concrete target. **22.♕d4 ♘f7 23.c5 ♕g7 24.♕e3 ♕f6 25.bxa6 bxa6 26.♖ab1 ♔f8** Black could have taken the opportunity to make a stab at activity with 26...g5. **27.♘e5 ♔g7**

28.g4!? White must open some lines to get access to the Black king. **28...♖a7 29.gxf5 exf5 30.♖b6 d6 31.cxd6 ♖b7 32.♖fb1 ♘xd6** This costs material but he could not just sit and watch the pawn either. **33.♕c5! ♖d8 34.♖xb7+ ♗xb7+ 35.♖xb7+ ♘xb7 36.♕c7+ ♔f8 37.♕xb7 g5** This loses at once but Black still had nothing constructive to do. **38.♘d7+ ♖xd7 39.♕xd7 ♕a1+ 40.♔g2 ♕b2+ 41.♔f3** The struggle is over. **41...gxf4 42.♕xf5+ ♔e7 43.♕c5+ ♔e6 44.♕c6+ ♔e7 45.♕c7+ ♔e6 46.♗c4+ ♔f6 47.♕d6+ ♔g5 48.h4+!** Forces mate. 48...♔xh4 49.♕xh6 mate. Black resigned.

Most people tend to find the main tournament tiring enough with one double round and no rest days. But Magnus also wanted to fit in a team blitz handicap tournament over two evenings and then the individual Norwegian blitz championship on the night before the final round. The latter is a big event and a lot of fun, but does not carry a lot of real prestige.

Magnus took the bronze in both of these events. In the individual blitz, where 24 games are played until late in the evening, he shared first place with GM Leif

Erlend Johannessen and IM Roy Fyllingen but came last in the play-off.

At this point, the night before the final round, Magnus still had a chance to finish at the top of the Norwegian championship as well as take his third and final IM-norm, but the blitz came first. He would play Black against GM Rune Djurhuus at 10 a.m. the next morning and might have been able to use the time more efficiently by preparing and sleeping, but that was not his style and no one was going to pressure him. He was allowed to have fun and just play, like any other twelve year old.

Djurhuus had 5½ points and was sharing first place with Berge Østenstad and Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen (Magnus' first trainer) and would have dearly loved to have beaten Magnus and secured at least a play-off for a first national title. But he was never close, Magnus, who was half a point behind the leading trio, easily held a draw.

Djurhuus did not disguise how impressed he was with Magnus. 'He is just incredible and the best in Western Europe at his age. I simply could not break through his defences. The way he is developing, there is little that can stop him.'

Torbjørn, who had already secured his first IM-norm, lost to Roy Fyllingen while Østenstad's supreme championship experience allowed him to dispatch Kjetil A. Lie and take clear first. An exciting finish, but it was clear that Magnus lacked that extra ingredient that would allow him to finish at the top. Maybe he had too much fun, even if shared 3-7 place was rock solid.

The chess community has always struggled to get coverage. With Magnus leading the way this was no longer a problem, he was a reader's treat. Nettavisen followed the national championship with running results and articles and used Magnus as an attention-grabber in their headlines and leads. At this point the Carlsens had decided to take a year off with the entire family to give their children a chance to see the world and to follow Magnus on his tournament circuit. This also made headlines. The day after the NM we could read this on VG's web site:

Chess genius Magnus (12) drops school

FREDRIKSTAD (VG) The house is rented, the car sold. For a whole year the 'Chess family' will travel the world in order to see that super talent Magnus gets even better.

The world tour did not start at once. Only mother Sigrun was along for the first week of the Politiken Cup in Copenhagen a few days after the national championship. The second week her father took over. The rest of the family were having a cabin holiday near Ula in Larvik.

With 31 Norwegians on the starting line in this major open event Magnus had plenty of friends and fans. This tournament would turn out to be a new leap forward.

He did not start well, drawing Marte Egeland, who was Norway's top junior girl at the time but still not rated more than 1773 against Magnus' 2346. In the next round he barely scraped a win against a 1700 player. At this point his mother was on the verge of pulling him out of the event. It was unbearably warm in the playing hall and it was apparent that Magnus was suffering. But his mood couldn't be

better and when he won his next three games, there was nothing to do but stick it out, sauna or not.

In the fourth round Magnus crushed Sweden's best junior player, Linus Olsson (2244).

□ **Linus Olsson**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Copenhagen 2003

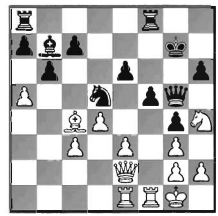
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.♖c1 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♕a5+ 12.♔f1 ♖d8 Magnus couldn't remember what was normal and just set up naturally with his pieces pressing against the centre. More careful souls would have developed the bishop to d7 and put the f-rook on c8 to be able to protect f7 with ♘d8. **13.h4 ♗d7 14.h5 ♖ac8 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.♘f4?** White is careless. 16.♕b3 is a more critical test of Black's set-up.

16...♘xd4! With so many white pieces exposed it is hardly surprising that this tactic works. **17.♔g1** 17.♗xd4 ♖xc4! and 18...♗b5 wins at once for Black. **17...♗b5 18.♗xb5 ♖xc1 19.♕xc1 ♕xb5** White has no compensation for the pawn. **20.♕a3 ♘e2+ 21.♔h2 ♘xf4 22.♗xf4 ♖d3!** Now he also has to give up his queen to avoid mate.

After this he took his first grandmaster scalp against Chris Ward (2531) from England in even more convincing fashion. Magnus had prepared for the game by closely reading Ward's own book on the Nimzo-Indian Defence and his study paid off.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Chris Ward**
Copenhagen 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 b6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 g5 7.♗g3 ♘e4 8.♕c2 ♗b7 9.e3 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 ♘xg3 This variation has a long history, and its story is not finished yet. Black still has not found a completely satisfactory continuation but new ideas keep cropping up. Perhaps Ward's idea of an early queen trip to g5 will not survive this game. **11.fxg3 g4 12.♘h4 ♕g5 13.♕d2** White doesn't manage to put his queen on the better square e2 at once with this move order, but this is not so important. **13...♘c6 14.♗d3 ♘e7 15.0-0 f5 16.a4** It doesn't hurt to loosen Black up a bit on this flank, especially if he had ideas of castling queenside. **16...0-0 17.a5 d5 18.♕e2 ♔g7 19.♖ae1!** Magnus prepares a break with his e-pawn. **19...dxc4** Ward has not foreseen what is coming. **20.♗xc4 ♘d5**

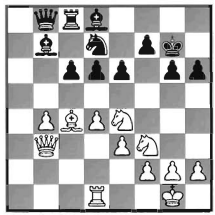


21.e4! Magnus exploits Black's woeful king position to break his way in. **21...♘xc3** After 21...fxe4 22.♕xe4 Black's king is even more exposed. **22.♕c2! ♗xe4** Or 22...♘xe4 23.♗xe6 and both f5 and c7 are hanging. **23.♕xc3 ♖ae8 24.axb6 axb6 25.♗b5** Black does not manage to build a fortress. **25...♖e7 26.♗c6 ♗xc6 27.♕xc6 ♖f6 28.♕c3 ♖ff7 29.d5+!** Now the knight returns to life as well. **29...♕f6 30.♕e3 exd5** Black can give up. **31.♘xf5+ ♕xf5 32.♖xf5 ♖xe3 33.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 34.♖xe3** White has no problems handling Black's passed pawns. **34...d4 35.♖e4 c5 36.♔f2 ♔f6 37.♔e2 b5 38.♔d3 h5 39.♖e8** Black resigned.

Now Magnus was among the leaders in the tournament with 4½ out of 5, along with a pack of strong grandmasters. Leif Erlend Johannessen was also having a great event and had the same score. In the sixth round Magnus boldly sacrificed a piece and harried Indian grandmaster Krishnan Sasikiran (2654) but the talented Indian survived the storm and escaped with a draw.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Krishnan Sasikiran**
Copenhagen 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.♘f3 0-0 5.♗g5 d6 6.e3 Magnus chooses a modest set-up out of respect for his opponent. **6...c6 7.♗e2 a6 8.0-0 b5 9.cxb5** It is not quite clear how White should tackle such an advance, but 9.a3 is more common, just letting the b-pawn stand there. **9...axb5 10.b4 ♘bd7 11.a4** White gets no advantage like this, but it is solid. Magnus had not yet come to the point where he burned to beat everyone he met. **11...bxa4 12.♖xa4 ♗b7 13.♖xa8 ♕xa8 14.♕a1 h6 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♕b2 ♕b8 17.♕b3 e6 18.♖d1 ♖c8 19.♗c4 ♔g7 20.♘e4 ♗d8**



21.♗xe6! Magnus was originally satisfied with a draw, but when the chance to make an exciting sacrifice appears, he cannot refuse. **21...fxe6 22.♕xe6 ♘f8 23.♕xd6** White has three healthy pawns for a piece. The position is probably roughly in balance, but there is plenty to play for. **23...♕c7 24.♕c5** Normally the player with the pawns should welcome piece trades, but there Black's king is exposed and Magnus wants to exploit this. **24...♘e6 25.♕c3 ♔h7 26.♘e5 ♕e7 27.f4 ♖c7 28.♕c2 ♘f8**

29.f5! Black is now on the ropes. **29...gxf5 30.♘g3 ♗c8 31.♘xf5 ♗xf5 32.♕xf5+ ♔g8 33.♖f1 ♕e8 34.♕c2 ♕e6 35.♕f2 ♘h7 36.♕g3+ ♖g7 37.♕f3 ♖e7 38.♕g3+ ♖g7 39.♕f3 ♖e7**

40.♕g3+? Magnus is certainly winning after 40.♘xc6. It looks like Black's plan was to take on e3, but then the bishop on d8 is hanging at the end. But the pressure from the clock and an enduring respect for his opponent's high rating convinced Magnus to repeat moves. He wouldn't do that today!

For Magnus this game was a 'eureka' experience. Without gaining anything from the opening he nevertheless managed to create good winning chances against a player ranked number 40 in the world, and who was considered a prospect to join the absolute world elite.

The win against Chris Ward had also clearly shown that Magnus could cope with strong players. The time of great respect and often careful play against grandmasters was now definitely over. From now on it was full throttle against whoever happened to be sitting across the table.

True, in the next round GM and former world title candidate Artur Yusupov (2583) was too much to handle and he had to settle for a draw against compatriot Bjørnar Byklum (2173) in round eight. Against Hans Krogh Harestad (2249) from Stavanger in round nine Magnus got the chance to sparkle with a lovely queen sacrifice.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Hans Krogh Harestad**
Copenhagen 2003

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗e7 7.♖e1 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.♘bd2 ♘c6 13.d5 This slows the tempo of the game down. **13...♘d8 14.a4 ♖a7** Black does not want to cede the a-file but 14...♖b8 is more normal. **15.♘f1** It may be possible to exploit Black's last move by playing 15.b4!? **15...g6 16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.♘g3** It is possible to insert 17.g4, but Magnus prefers piece play. **17...♘d7 18.♘h2 f6 19.♗e3 ♘b6 20.axb5 axb5 21.♗d3** White's ambitions are on the kingside, but it doesn't hurt to apply a little pressure on the opposite flank as well. **21...♗d7 22.♕d2 ♘f7 23.♖xa7 ♕xa7 24.♕e2 ♕a6 25.♘g4 ♔g7 26.♗c1 ♘a4 27.♗c2 ♖a8 28.♕e3 c4 29.♖f1** White loads the heavy artillery. **29...♘c5 30.♘h6 ♘g5** Black has defended well. **31.f4 exf4 32.♕xf4 ♗xh3?** This looks like a winner but Magnus has seen a beautiful combination. White also had an attack after 32...♔xh6 33.h4 but it is far from clear. **33.♕h4 ♗d7 34.e5! dxe5**

35.♘h5+! gxh5 36.♕xg5+!! This is just gorgeous. **36...fxg5 37.♖f7+ ♔xh6 38.♖xh7** Mate.

With 6½ out of 9 Magnus was near the IM-norm but had problems with a new rule that required half of one's opponents to be some kind of title holders, or one less than half if the player himself had a title, for a performance to count. Magnus had met three GMs and done well against them but the quality of and results against title holders was not a factor. A title norm must include at least nine games, but since there were eleven here there were still chances.

Magnus was even closer after a draw against English grandmaster and another former world title candidate Jonathan Speelman (2589) in round ten. Now Magnus' rating performance was so high that he could likely win a dispensation against the new rule and get his final IM-norm. But to be completely sure, Magnus struck hard with a win against the 15-year-old female super-talent, GM Humpy Koneru (2468) of India.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Humpy Koneru**
Copenhagen 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.b3 d5 6.♗g2 Magnus has an incredibly versatile opening repertoire. From my own youth I remember some enormous complications that I could never stand to look at resulting from 6...dxc4 7.♘e5 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♕xd4, but Magnus shies away from nothing and has this under control as well. **6...♗d6** Koneru chooses a more conservative approach. **7.0-0 0-0 8.♘bd2 ♕e7 9.♕c2 ♗b7 10.♗b2 ♘a6 11.♘h4!?** A startling move – it is more natural to centralise the rooks, with a draw as the likely result. **11...♗a3** 11...c5 is more natural. **12.cxd5 ♗xb2 13.♕xb2 exd5 14.e3 ♘e4 15.♘hf3** There is no point in going to f5 any more. **15...c5 16.♘e5 ♖ac8 17.♖ac1 ♖fe8 18.♘d3 ♘c7 19.♘f4 ♕f6 20.♘h5 ♕h6 21.♘f4** Magnus needed just a draw to ensure his IM-norm. **21...g5** Black has no attack but it is good to take away the outpost f4 from the knight. **22.♘e2 ♘e6 23.♘xe4 dxe4 24.♖fd1 ♕f6 25.♘c3 ♘f8?** This passes up the last chance for a draw. After 25...cxd4 26.♘xe4 all the central pawns disappear. **26.d5!** Finally Magnus can take the initiative. **26...♗a6 27.♕c2! ♖cd8** Koneru had perhaps overlooked that 27...♗d3 is met by 28.♘xe4!. **28.♘xe4 ♕g6 29.b4 f5 30.♘d2 ♘d7** 30...cxb4 is a better try. **31.♕a4 b5 32.♕a5 c4**

33.d6! ♘b8 Or 33...♕xd6 34.♘xc4!. **34.a4! ♕xd6 35.axb5 ♖e5 36.♕a1!** 36.♗f1! is just as strong. **36...♖xb5 37.♘e4 ♕e7 38.♘f6+ ♔f7 39.♘d5!** 1-0 Black has no good square for her queen.

With 8 out of 11 and a rating performance of 2503 Magnus took his final IM-norm with half a point to spare. Just twelve years old, he became the youngest Nordic player ever to earn the game's second highest title. He was also the world's youngest IM at that time.

7 On tour in a mini-van

August-December 2003

'Nothing special, he just performed around 2500.'
– Norwegian grandmaster Jonathan Tisdall answering the question of how Magnus had done at the European Club Cup.

In the autumn of 2003 the entire family would take part in the unfolding fairy tale. The Carlsens had long dreamed of a year off from school and work, just travelling. When Magnus finished primary school and was about to start at a new secondary, the time had come. If they were going to realise their dream it had to happen now. It also fit in well with the status of the other children's schooling.

In July 2003 they rented out their house. Just before this, they sold a family car. The only thing left to do was pack everything they needed into the old family mini-van, a grey Hyundai H100 from 1994, and get ready for a year on the road. The timing was also perfect in regard to Magnus' chess development. The route could be laid out according to his tournaments, and some places Magnus would be able to arrange for cheap or free accommodation for the whole gang.

The entire family was enthusiastically behind the trip. The girls, 6, 9, and 14, were looking forward to a year without school every day. The Norwegian public school system can sometimes make less than efficient use of a student's time, so the family had great ambitions about a far more educational year roaming around Europe. Ellen and Magnus, the eldest children, read their textbooks in the car while the two youngest needed more guidance from their parents. In addition, they got everything that comes along with travel – experiences, geography, history, politics, social studies and more. No one had to worry that they would not be advancing their education.

The trip did not exactly start at once. What could be more beautiful than Norway in the summer? It was much better to spend time at the family cabin in Kjerringberget in Larvik, with its wonderful view of Svenner lighthouse. From there they could also keep an eye on the Danish ferry Peter Wessel when it left Larvik, and plan the exact time they would board it and begin their grand journey.

The trip to Europe officially began on Monday, 18 August 2003. Friends were starting school that day and it was a natural time to depart. Two days later Magnus was officially named an international master at the FIDE Presidential Board meeting in Nigeria.

Some dates and places were set in stone on the Carlsen itinerary. From 12-23 September the European Youth championship would be held in Budva, Montenegro. A week later they would move on to the European Club Cup in Crete, followed by the World Youth championships in Halkidiki in northern Greece two weeks after that. Apart from that, they were free to pencil in their route on the map accord-

ing to what best fit in, and the Schwarzacher Open in Austria from 23-31 August fit perfectly.

Even if the German roads were good, the old family van was not especially fast. It took three days driving and two nights in a tent to reach the beautiful Austrian Alpine city sixty kilometres south of Salzburg, birthplace of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Magnus would later be called the 'Mozart of chess' by the Washington Post.

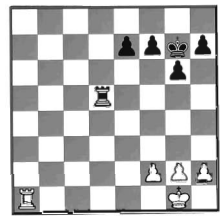
If Magnus might stir thoughts of Mozart, the setting for this tournament conjured up the 'Sound of Music'. Here there was harmony as far as the eye could see. The family found an impressive Tyrolean house to rent cheaply, with a view of an impressive mountain range rising 2,500 metres to the south of Salzburg. With sunshine, an outdoor pool nearby, mountain hikes and freshly baked whole-grain rolls for breakfast every day, the family had an ideal start to their adventure.

They also fit in a trip to Bischofshofen, the famous winter sports venue. The sports fanatic in Magnus wanted to see the hill where the traditional New Year's ski jumping was held. The Carlsens also bumped into a huge parade of people dancing in national costume, and had a pastoral three-kilometre walk past crowds of cows and bulls to the playing hall. The setting was idyllic, spoiled perhaps only by a shabby mini-van on the stone slabs outside the Tyrolean house.

When Magnus showed sparkling form at the chess board, life was even better. The organisers were taken by surprise when they learned a little twelve year old was making an IM-norm in their event, unaware the child was really hunting a grandmaster result.

In Kiel the year before Magnus had lost a rook endgame with three pawns against four on one side of the board against IM Michael Kopylov (2418) from Ukraine. Against Vincenzo Adinolfi (2110) in the first round of the Schwarzacher Open Magnus got exactly the same ending, but this time on the right side of the torture.

□ **Vincenzo Adinolfi**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Schwarzach 2003



36.h4! An important move. The defence is much harder if Black had been allowed to play g6-g5 undisturbed. **36...♔f6 37.g3 ♖d7 38.♔g2** White has set up the proper defensive position and must now sit and wait. **38...h5 39.♔f3 ♔f5 40.♖a5+ e5 41.♔e3 ♖b7 42.♖a3 ♖b6 43.♔f3 f6** Magnus also plays the best – his problem is making progress from here. **44.♖a4 ♖d6 45.♖b4 ♖d3+ 46.♔g2 ♖d2 47.♖b5 ♔e6 48.♖b6+ ♖d6 49.♖b5 ♖d5 50.♖b6+ ♔f5 51.♖a6 e4 52.♖a3 ♔e5 53.♔f1 ♖d3 54.♖a5+ ♔e6 55.♔e2?** White should keep his king on g2. It is not too late to return but White signals that he is not aware of the dangers in the position. **55...♖d5 56.♖a8 ♔f5 57.♖a6 ♖d3 58.♖a5+ ♔g4!** Now Magnus has secured a route to g2 with his king. **59.♖a6 ♖f3 60.♖e6 ♔h3!**

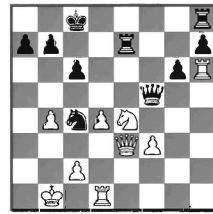
61.♖xe4 ♔g2! White should never have allowed the black king in this far. **62.g4 ♖xf2+ 63.♔e1 ♔g3 64.gxh5 gxh5 65.♖e3+ ♖f3 66.♖e8 ♔xh4** With White's king inside the f-file this would have been a theoretically drawn position but there the king is cut off. **67.♖g8 ♖f5** Magnus has found a simple winning plan. **68.♖g6 ♔h3 69.♔e2 h4 70.♔e1 ♔h2 71.♔e2 h3 72.♔e1 ♔h1 73.♔e2 h2 74.♔e1 ♖g5! 75.♖xf6 ♔g2 76.♖f2+ ♔h3** White resigned.

In the next round, against Lambert Danner (2178), Magnus displayed his versatility. Magnus has a remarkably broad understanding of the game and a mastery of most types of position. The following could have gone right into a textbook on unusual variations in the Dutch Defence.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Lambert Danner**
Schwarzach 2003

1.d4 f5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗g5 I usually advise my students to go for standard openings even if they don't know much theory, so that they can learn what they may have done wrong later. This kind of experience sinks in, and besides, one can often think well when undisturbed by 'expert opinion'. For Magnus the opposite is nearly the case. He can well take unorthodox paths from time to time to develop himself even more. **3...d5 4.♗xf6 exf6 5.e3 ♗e6 6.♕f3 c6 7.♘ge2 ♗d6 8.♘f4 ♕e7** Black should probably keep his light squared bishop with 8...♗f7. It doesn't look good now behind all those pawns but one fine day, when the position opens up, it will come to life. Also, it is a good defensive piece. **9.♗d3 g6 10.0-0-0 ♘d7** There goes the last chance to save the bishop. **11.♘xe6!** Well assessed by Magnus. **11...♕xe6 12.h3! 0-0-0 13.g4 fxg4 14.hxg4 ♖df8 15.♖h6** White has strong pressure on the kingside. **15...♖fg8 16.♖dh1 ♘f8 17.e4!** With Black's pieces tied up defending kingside weaknesses, attention shifts to the centre. **17...dxe4 18.♘xe4 ♗e7 19.b3!** With a clear threat. Black cannot exploit the weaknesses on the dark squares around White's king. **19...♖g7 20.♗c4 ♕d7 21.♖d1 f5 22.gxf5 ♕xf5 23.♕e3 ♗a3+ 24.♔b1 ♖e7 25.f3 ♘d7**

26.b4! Magnus does not let the chance to combine tactically go to waste. **26...♗xb4 27.a3 ♘b6** Black wriggles, but Magnus has seen furthest. **28.axb4 ♘xc4**



29.♘d6+! White wins the exchange. **29...♔d7 30.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 31.♘xf5+**

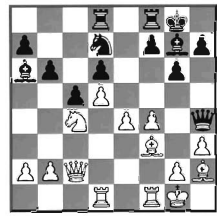
gxf5 32.♔c1! Magnus finishes with precision. **32...♘d6 33.♖dh1 ♘f7 34.♖xh7 ♖g8 35.♔d2 ♖g2+ 36.♔d3 ♔f6 37.♖7h2 ♖g3 38.♔e3 ♔e6 39.♔f4 ♖g8 40.♖e2+ ♔d5 41.♖e7 ♘d6 42.♖e5+ ♔c4 43.♖c5+ ♔xb4 44.♖b1+ ♔a4 45.♖a1+ ♔b4 46.♖xa7** Black fights well but has little chance of changing the outcome. **46...♖h8 47.♔e5! ♖h6 48.♖a1 ♘c4+ 49.♔xf5 b6 50.♖b1+ ♔c3 51.♖xb6 ♔xd4 52.♖cxc6 ♖h3 53.♔g4 ♖h2 54.♖b4** 1-0 White can, after 54...♖xc2, liquidate to a winning pawn endgame, if he likes.

In the third round Magnus lost to Croatian GM Robert Zelcic (2543). He became unnerved by his opponent's incredibly fast play. But in the next round, against Christian Laqua (2196), there was a new display of endgame technique.

Magnus had developed a murderous method against players rated below 2200. He has scarcely conceded points against players of this level after learning how to beat them. Gradually, he has become just as effective against international masters. The ascent to the next level began in Schwarzach with the following convincing win over IMs Sergei Krivoshey (2507) from Ukraine.

□ **Sergei Krivoshey**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Schwarzach 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♗f4 ♗g7 4.e3 0-0 5.♗e2 d6 6.h3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5?! I thought that this break needed to be prepared with 7...♕e8, and after this game, I still do. Magnus sacrifices often, but not always correctly. To me, it looks like White can calmly take on e5. After 8.dxe5 ♘h5 9.♗g5 ♕e8 10.♘c3! White has 11.♘d5 coming strongly and Black has nothing special after 8...dxe5 9.♘xe5. **8.♗h2 ♕e7** Now Black has everything in order. **9.c4 b6** What Black absolutely must not do in this type of position is play c7-c6 and preferably not e5-e4 either. White's dream scenario is a chain of white pawns on e3, d4 and c5 against Black's on e4, d5 and c6, with a gigantic bishop on h2. Magnus is aware of this, but 9...♘e4 followed by a kingside pawn storm had more bite. **10.♘c3 ♗b7 11.♕c2 exd4 12.♘xd4** After 12.exd4 ♘e4 Black's bishop is better than White's but the position is in balance. **12...♘e5 13.♖ad1 c5** According to ancient wisdom pawns should only be moved with care, since they cannot go back. In a few moves the character of the position changes dramatically. **14.♘b3 ♖ad8 15.e4 ♕e6 16.♘d5** White does not even try a project based on pressuring Black's backward d-pawn. After 16.♘d2 ♘c6 Black is very active. **16...♘xd5 17.cxd5 ♕e7** The game has evolved into a Benoni pawn structure, where Black can be pleased by the exchange of knights, which gives him more room to manoeuvre. **18.f4 ♘d7 19.♗f3 ♕h4!** An irritating outpost. **20.♘d2?** This costs material. **20...♗a6 21.♘c4**



21...♗xc4! For a change it is Magnus who grabs a pawn. **22.♕xc4 ♗xb2 23.♕a6 ♕e7! 24.♖fe1** Taking on a7 is always met by ♖a8 and taking White's a-pawn. **24...♖fe8 25.a4 ♖c8 26.♖e2 ♗g7 27.e5** White has some initiative but Black is compact and his pieces are well placed to ride out the storm. **27...dxe5 28.d6 ♕d8 29.fxe5 ♗xe5 30.♗xe5 ♖xe5 31.♖de1 ♖xe2 32.♖xe2**

32...c4! Black's passed pawn is at least as dangerous as White's d-pawn. **33.♗d5 c3 34.♕d3 ♘f6 35.♗b3 ♖c6** And now White's only pride and joy exits the game. **36.♖e7 ♖xd6 37.♕e3 ♖d3 38.♕e2 ♖d2 39.♕e3 c2!** The attack against f7 is not dangerous. **40.♗xf7+ ♔f8** And White resigned.

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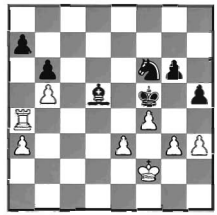
In the sixth round Magnus drew with GM Andrei Shchekachev (2556) and in the eighth he really had to exert himself to the utmost to hold a draw against German GM Gerald Hertneck (2525).

□ Gerald Hertneck
■ Magnus Carlsen
Schwarzach 2003

The situation in the diagram below looks bleak for Magnus. The rook is about to liquidate the queenside pawns and a similar project for Black on the other side takes too much time. But Magnus has spotted a chance.



39...♘e4+ 40.♔e1 ♘c5 41.♖xa7 ♔e4 42.♖g7 Hertneck is most concerned with eating pawns and forgets that Black can use his king in attack. **42...♔xe3 43.♖xg6 ♗c4 44.♖xb6 ♘d3+ 45.♔f1** 45.♔d1 ♗b3 mate would have been a nice finish. **45...♘e5+** Here an audible gasp and laughter from the German GM signalled that he understood that the little lad had tricked him. White must go back to avoid being pushed into the corner, where he might even be mated. **46.♔e1 ♘d3+ 47.♔f1 ♘e5+** Draw.

With a win with white against Russian GM Mikhail Ivanov (2406) in the last round Magnus would in fact have made his first grandmaster norm. But in 30°C heat and a bit nervous for the occasion he didn't manage more than a draw. Still, 6½/9 and a rating performance of 2537 was his best result so far. Third place out of 79 participants was also impressive.

The Carlsens had twelve days to get to the next tournament, the European Youth championships in Budva. Time to get out

the map and find the shortest route – but this time shortest would not turn out to be quickest. They lost a few hours by choosing two mountain passes rising 2,500 metres over sea level. There were no regrets over taking the 'Alpenhochstrasse' (High Alpine Road) as they took in the view of 'Grossglockner' and other top Austrian peaks. They also visited Zell am See, a famed ski and holiday resort.

At last they put the Alps behind them and hit Italian highways. The trip to the Croatian border went quickly, and they stopped for three days in a camping cabin in a small tourist sport just north of Split. It was a shock to drive past the shells of bombed houses from the civil war ten years before, and the roads were difficult but the old town in Dubrovnik was untouched and just as impressive as before. They spent five days in this lovely holiday city on the Adriatic. They had to settle for sleeping in a tent, with cats and dogs wandering in and out, but it put no damper on their mood or enjoyment. The scenery was magnificent and the weather and seaside life even better. The Magnus Carlsen parents fit a bit of cultural education into their 2.5 kilometre trek along the wall surrounding the old town, and imagined the defence of the city from naval attack.

They arrived in Budva for the European Youth in good time, and met the rest of the Norwegian delegation. The playing hall was just five kilometres from the hotel island Sveti Stefan, where Bobby Fischer turned up to play his second match against Boris Spassky in 1992.

Budva is a beautiful city but the playing conditions in a large gymnasium were basic. Chess is enormously popular throughout former Yugoslavia but rehabilitation still needs to be done after the painful 1990s. The hotel where they lived was large and grand, but somewhat dilapidated.

Magnus was born late in the year. Despite being the youngest in his group, the frail Norwegian was the favourite in the boys U-14. He began well with an elegant exchange sacrifice against Evgeny Perman (2081).

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Evgeny Perman**
Budva 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.g3!? This way of developing the bishop can be used against nearly every type of Sicilian. **6...g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 ♘c6 10.♘de2 ♗d7 11.♔h2** White usually plays 11.a4 to hinder the advance of the b-pawn. **11...b5 12.f4 ♖c8 13.♘d5!** The thematic move in White's system. **13...♘xd5 14.exd5 ♘a5 15.c3 ♘c4 16.b3 ♘b6 17.♗e3 b4**

18.c4! Typical Magnus. For the sacrificed exchange he gets excellent piece activity. **18...♗xa1 19.♕xa1 f5** This does not look pretty but Black does not have it easy. His

knight on b6 is especially bad. **20.♘d4 h6 21.♕e1 a5 22.g4!** White's attack is underway already. **22...♔h7** After taking twice on g4 White has both ♘c6 and ♕h4 as good replies. **23.gxf5 gxf5 24.♘f3** White threatens to simply play 25.♗xb6 ♕xb6 26.♕xe7+ and the bishop falls. **24...♗e8 25.♕h4 ♗f7 26.♘g5+ ♔g6** Black gave up before Magnus could play 27.♗f3. Black is mated in a few moves.

After this, Magnus got to use his technique against Kirill Stupak (2161).

□ **Kirill Stupak**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Budva 2003

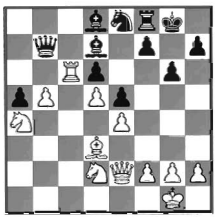
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.0-0 0-0 5.d4 d6 6.c4 ♘bd7 7.♘c3 e5 8.dxe5 White signals that he is satisfied with a draw. **8...dxe5 9.e4 c6 10.b3 ♕e7 11.a4 ♖d8** Either here or on the next move Magnus should have played 11...a5. The pin after 12.♗a3 ♘c5 is easy to escape. **12.♗a3 ♕e8 13.♕c2** Now it is White who should play a pawn to a5. Neither of the players seem to have noticed this important move. **13...♘f8 14.h3 ♘e6 15.♖ad1 ♘d7 16.♘e2 a5!** Finally! Only now can Black claim an advantage. White's pawn structure on the queenside becomes an eternal burden. **17.♗d6 f6 18.♘h4 ♘dc5 19.♔h2 ♘d4 20.♘xd4 ♖xd6 21.♘df5 ♖xd1 22.♘xg7 ♔xg7 23.♖xd1 ♗e6 24.f4 ♗f7 25.♕f2 ♕e7 26.♕e3 exf4** Black gives up control of d4 but this is OK since the knight will not find a better post than the one on c5. **27.gxf4 ♖e8 28.♖e1 ♖d8 29.♕g3 ♔h8 30.♖e3 ♖d4 31.e5 f5** White has created a fine protected passed pawn on the e-file but the rest of his position still leaves much to be desired. **32.♘f3 ♖d8 33.♘g5 ♗e6 34.h4 h6 35.♘xe6** This exchange makes life easier for Black – the bishop was not very strong. **35...♘xe6 36.♖f3?** Black has a small advantage after 36.♕xg6 ♕xh4+ 37.♖h3 ♘xf4, but not enough to win against accurate play. **36...♔h7 37.♗h3 h5!** Now all counterplay is thwarted and Black can concentrate fully on the queenside. **38.♕e1**

38...♕b4! Highlighting the weaknesses in White's camp. **39.♕xb4 axb4 40.♗f1 ♖d2+ 41.♔g3 ♘c5 42.e6** A desperate attempt to create counterplay, but White's rook cannot achieve anything single-handedly. **42...♘xe6 43.♖e3 ♘c5 44.♖e5 ♘e4+ 45.♔h3 ♔g8** 45...♔h6 was also possible but Magnus likes to centralise the king. **46.c5 ♖c2!** In order to meet 47.♗c4+ with 47...♖xc4+ and the b-pawn trundles in. **47.♖e7 ♘xc5 48.♗c4+ ♔f8 49.♖f7+ ♔e8 50.♖g7 ♖c3+ 51.♔g2 ♖xc4!** 0-1 The white king blocks the rook's retreat on the g-file.

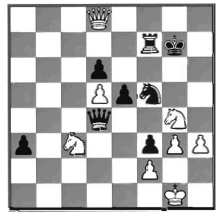
In the next two rounds Magnus was both lucky and good. His rivals could hardly believe their ears when they heard he had won the following game against Michal Olszewski (2227).

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Michal Olszewski**
Budva 2003

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♕e2 A new twist for the sake of variation. Normal is 6.♖e1. **6...b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.♖d1 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.d5** With the queen on e2 the usual manoeuvre of ♘d2-f1-g3 does not work since then the bishop is hanging on c2 after 12.♘bd2 cxd4. **12...♘e8 13.b4!?** A bold move given the chance of a knight turning up on c4, but Black has problems keeping his queenside intact. **13...cxb4 14.cxb4 ♘c4 15.a4 bxa4** Black doesn't even try to keep control of the support point on c4. After 15...♖b8 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗d3 Black will eventually have trouble with his b-pawn. **16.♗d3 ♘b6 17.♗e3 ♕b7 18.b5 a5** Black has no pawn weaknesses left after 18...axb5, but his problems are far from over. **19.♘c3 ♗d7 20.♖dc1 ♖c8 21.♗xb6** Magnus has seen that he can plant a rook on c6, but 21.♘xa4 was probably better – the bishop on e3 is strong. **21...♕xb6 22.♘xa4 ♖xc1+ 23.♖xc1 ♕b7 24.♘d2 ♗d8 25.♖c6 g6** Nothing compels Black to take on c6.



26.♘c4? Magnus forgets that Black can now take the rook and White cannot recapture with the d-pawn, but his position is not as good as he thought it was during the game. **26...♗xc6 27.bxc6** This was not the concept. **♕b4 28.♗c2 ♘c7 29.g3 ♘b5** Black's pieces funnel into play. **30.♘e3 ♘d4 31.♕d1 f5 32.exf5 gxf5 33.♔g2 ♔h8 34.♗b1 f4** White is in terrible trouble but now Magnus wakes up and drums up a first class swindle. **35.♗e4!? ♘b3** There are several good moves, but this does not look stupid – two pieces are hanging. 35....fxe3 36.♕h5 lets White off the hook. **36.♗xh7** The only chance. **f3+ 37.♔g1 ♔xh7 38.♕c2+ ♔h6 39.c7 ♗xc7 40.♕xc7** Black is still winning but White has some sneaky counterchances. **40...♘d4 41.♘g4+ ♔g6 42.h3** White secures his king position for at least a little while. **42...♘f5 43.♘c3** White begins to gain some coordination. **43...a4 44.♕c6 ♕d4 45.♔h2** White waits to see what Black will try. **45...♖h8 46.♔g1** The knight on g4 was hanging. **46...a3 47.♕d7** Finally White threatens something. **47...♖f8 48.♕e6+ ♔g7 49.♕d7+ ♖f7 50.♕d8**



50...♖e7?? Black can calmly take on c3. After 51.♕g5+ ♔h7 52.♕h5+ ♔g8 53.♕g5+ ♘g7 there is no perpetual check. **51.♘e3!** Suddenly it isn't that clear anymore. **51...♔g6 52.♘xf5** Here an exciting variation was possible: 52.♕g8+ ♘g7 53.♘f5!? ♔xf5 54.♕h7 ♔f6 55.♘e4++ and Black has to give the queen

for the knight, as 55...♔f7 56.♘xd6+ leads to mate on the next move. But after 55...♕xe4 56.♕xe4 ♖a7 Black has enough compensation for a draw thanks to the a-pawn. **52...♕xc3** 52...♔xf5 leads to a draw but Black still wants to win. **53.♘xe7+ ♔f7 54.♔h2!** Black doesn't escape the checks after 54.♕g8+ ♔xe7 55.♕e6+. In view of the course of the game Magnus might have been happy with a draw, but now he is playing to win. **54...♕b2 55.h4! ♕xf2+ 56.♔h3 ♕g2+** Forcing the king to go where it wants to go. **57.♔g4 f2 58.♕d7!** Black has a dangerous passed pawn but that will not help him. White has the battery he needs for a mating attack. **58...♕e4+ 59.♔g5 ♕e3+ 60.♔h5 ♕f3+ 61.g4 ♕f6 62.♘g6+ ♔g8 63.♘e7+ ♔f8 64.♘g6+ ♔g8 65.♔h6!** An aesthetic move. Black cannot avoid mate. **65...♕xh4+ 66.♘xh4 f1♕ 67.♕g7** Mate (1-0).

And it was luck that his opponent in round four, German Falko Bindrich (2334), did not know how to win a fairly basic endgame with white.

After surviving this, Magnus surged forward with three fine wins against strong opposition. True, he miscalculated a bit in the opening against Egor Krivoborodov (2298) and lost a pawn; but Magnus calmly played on and in the end tore up Black's king position.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Egor Krivoborodov**
Budva 2003

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.♘f3 ♘f6 8.♘e5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 ♘bd7?! 9...♗xd3 is normal. **10.♗xh7 ♘xe5 11.dxe5 ♕a5+ 12.c3?** Magnus overlooks Black's 14th move. After 12.♔f1 ♘xh7 the knight is very poorly placed on h7. **12...♕xe5+ 13.♗e4 ♘xe4 14.♕e2**

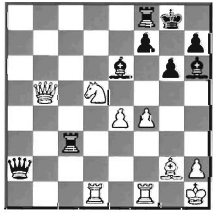
14...♘c5! An annoying surprise. After 15.♕xe5 ♘d3+ Black regains the queen. White just plays on. **15.♗e3 0-0-0 16.0-0 e6 17.♖ad1 ♗e7 18.♕f3 ♕f6 19.♕g4 b6 20.b4 ♘d7 21.♗d4 e5 22.♗e3 ♕e6 23.♘f5 ♔c7 24.♕f3 g6 25.♘xe7 ♕xe7 26.a4 f5 27.b5** Magnus begins to get compensation for the pawn. The black king is exposed. **27...♕e6 28.♖fe1 ♕c4 29.h5!** Magnus makes a little go a long way. **29...f4 30.♗c1 g5 31.♗a3!** White's counterplay has now definitely reached annoying levels. **31...g4?** Black is desperate to find activity, but this was not the way to do it. **32.♕xg4 ♖hg8 33.♕f3 ♘f6 34.♖xe5 ♖xd1+ 35.♕xd1** Suddenly it is White that has the extra pawn and Black's king has not become any safer. **35...♘d5 36.bxc6 ♔xc6 37.♕f3 ♕b3 38.♗c1 ♖d8 39.♗xf4 ♕xa4 40.♖e6+ ♔b7 41.♖e7+ ♔a8 42.♗c7 ♖d7 43.c4!** 1-0 A cute finish. After 43...♖xe7 44.♕xd5 is mate.

Things began to look undeniably bright when he waltzed over two of the other favourites with glittering play in the sharp

Sveshnikov Variation of the Sicilian, first with black against Russian Dimtri Andreikin (2400)...

□ **Dimtri Andreikin**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Budva 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5 9.♘d5 ♗e7 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.c3 0-0 12.♘c2 ♖b8 The point of this is to be able to answer a4 with bxa4 attacking White's b-pawn. **13.g3** A slightly unusual variation. If Black plays the plan f7-f5, the bishop will be well placed on g2, but his pressure against the black queenside is reduced. **13...♗g5 14.♗g2 a5 15.0-0 ♘e7 16.f4** A committal move, but it is difficult to get an advantage by calmer means. **16...♘xd5 17.♕xd5 ♗e6 18.♕d2 ♗h6 19.♘e3 ♕b6 20.♔h1 ♕c5 21.b4** It is hard for White to find moves when his rooks must keep watch over the pawns on a2 and f4, but now the c-pawn also becomes weak. **21...♕c7 22.♖ad1 ♖bc8 23.bxa5 ♕xa5 24.♕xd6 exf4 25.gxf4 ♕xa2 26.♕e5 g6 27.♕xb5 ♖xc3** The game looks drawish, but Black has a slight initiative. **28.♘d5**



28...♗h3! Magnus manages to conjure up an unusual attack with the few active pieces he has. **29.♖g1?** After 29.♗xh3 ♖xh3 30.♘f6+ ♔h8 31.♘g4 White has good drawing chances. **29...♖c2** Black has a serious battery on the second rank. **30.♕f1?** 30.♘e3 had to be tried. **30...♖f2** Now Magnus wins the queen. **31.♕xf2 ♕xf2 32.♗xh3 ♗xf4** There is enough material left to win. **33.♖g2 ♕h4 34.♖g4 ♕xh3 35.♖xf4 ♖b8 36.♖f2 ♖b2! 37.♖df1 ♕d3 38.♘f6+ ♔g7 39.♔g2 ♕d4!** Accurate play. **40.♘e8+ ♔f8 41.♖xb2 ♕xb2+ 42.♖f2 ♕xf2+** The simplest. **43.♔xf2 ♔xe8 44.♔f3 ♔e7 45.♔f4 ♔e6 46.♔g5 ♔e5 47.h4 ♔xe4 48.♔f6 ♔f4 49.♔xf7 ♔g4 50.♔g7 ♔xh4** White resigned.

... and then with white against Sergey Zhigalko (2399) from Belarus.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Sergey Zhigalko**
Budva 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5 9.♗xf6 This is much sharper than 9.♘d5. **9...gxf6 10.♘d5 f5 11.♗d3 ♗e6 12.0-0 ♗xd5 13.exd5 ♘e7 14.c3** Black is supposed to have good compensation for the pawn after 14.♘xb5 ♗g7. **14...♗g7 15.♕h5 e4 16.♗c2 ♕c8 17.♖ae1 0-0 18.♗b3 ♔h8** Zhigalko is not as well prepared as Magnus. Several top level games have continued 18...a5 19.♘xb5 a4 20.♗d1 ♕c5 21.♘d4 with a complicated position. **19.♔h1 ♘g6 20.♘c2 ♘f4 21.♕h4 ♗e5** Not 21...♘d3 22.♖e3 with the mate patrol heading for the h-file. **22.♘e3 ♖g8 23.♗c2**

23...b4!? Good fighting by Black. White threatened 24.g3, so it was important to do something fast. **24.g3 ♘d3** 24...♘g6 25.♕h5 gives White the advantage. **25.♗xd3 exd3 26.♕xb4 ♖b8 27.♕c4 f4?** After 27...♖xb2 28.♕xd3 Black maintains the balance. **28.♕xc8 ♖gxc8 29.♘d1** White manages to hang onto the extra pawn. **29...♖c5 30.gxf4 ♗xf4 31.♖e4 ♗e5 32.f4 ♗g7** Or 32...♗f6 33.♖f3 ♖xd5 34.♖ee3 and White wins the d-pawn. **33.♖fe1 ♗f6 34.c4 ♔g7 35.b3 ♖a5 36.♖g1+ ♔f8 37.♖g2** White has succeeded in keeping everything covered but the game is not over yet. **37...♖a3 38.♖e3 ♖e8** Also after 38...a5 39.♖xd3 a4 40.♖dg3 ♔e7 41.bxa4 White should win. **39.♖d2 ♖xe3 40.♘xe3 ♗d4 41.♘f5 ♗c5 42.♖xd3 ♖xa2 43.♖h3! ♔g8 44.♖h6!** Magnus gets by without his king. **44...♖a1+** Black wants to take the b-pawn with check but now White can solve his king problem. **45.♔g2 ♖a2+ 46.♔f3 ♖a3 47.♘xd6 ♖xb3+ 48.♔e4 ♖b6** White wins the rook ending comfortably after 48...♖c3 49.♔f5 ♗xd6 50.♖xd6 ♖xc4 51.♖xa6 ♔g7 52.d6 ♖d4 53.♔e5 ♖d2 54.♖a4!. **49.♘f5 ♖xh6 50.♘xh6+ ♔f8 51.♘f5** The a-pawn looks like it could be dangerous but Magnus has full control. **51...a5 52.d6 a4 53.♔d5! ♗b4** Black is mated after 53...a3 54.♔xc5 a2 55.d7. **54.c5 ♔e8 55.c6 ♗a5 56.♔c4!** Now the a-pawn is harmless. **56...♔d8 57.♘e7 h5 58.f5 h4 59.h3 f6 60.♘d5 a3 61.♔b3** 1-0

With 6½/7 Magnus had a full point lead with two rounds left to play and people were now beginning to assume that the title was his. They were even more confident when Magnus also built up a clearly winning position against Zaven Andriasian (2311), but Magnus miscalculated and went down to a humiliating defeat.

In the last round Magnus again had a winning position but he also ruined this game. That he ended in third place in the European championship – which is, after all, quite good – was little comfort. Never before had Magnus been so sad after a defeat. His father took him to a tennis court to try and cheer him up. It took a few hours, but at the prize ceremony in the evening Magnus was back, smiling and in good spirits once again.

There was nothing else to do but prepare for the next stop on the tour, the European Club championship in Crete, just six days later. The choice of route was not so obvious this time, either. The Carlsens were advised to drive north via Belgrade and then follow the main road south to Greece rather than heading south at once through Kosovo. Perhaps prejudices and memories from the civil war remain.

But the Carlsens were not afraid and decided to take the shortest route – it was more exciting and enlightening. Kosovo has been through a dramatic period and it is always interesting to get a first-hand impression of a place rather than seeing it through the media's narrow lenses. The

only uncomfortable incident occurred at the border crossing between Serbia and Kosovo. There was no queue but a tough Serbian guard in dark sunglasses detained them for nearly an hour. Apparently Henrik had not waited long enough by a stop sign and it was also wrong for Signe, aged six and a half, to be sitting in the front seat. For these offences the guard wanted 60 Euro. Eventually a United Nations officer came to the rescue and they were allowed to drive into Kosovo.

Once over the border they picked up speed on a brand-new highway lined with petrol stations on both sides. UN cars and Nordic UN battalions were everywhere. An hour and a half later they were already through Kosovo and on the Macedonian border. Here, too, there were problems – they did not have their green European insurance papers in order, but were eventually waved on. Macedonia was no place to visit, looking poor and unwelcoming, so they hurried on to Greece where, just over the border and late at night, they found a hotel where the owner spoke fluent Swedish after a nine-year stay there. Entering the European Union again was nearly like coming home.

The family had planned to take a boat from Athens to Crete the next afternoon, so Greece was also crossed as quickly as the ageing car would allow. Everyone was looking forward to coming to Rethymnon in Crete where the rest of Asker's team and a five-star hotel awaited. The trip had been especially hard on Magnus. After leaving Budva he had been hit by the stomach virus that had been circulating among the participants. Many became sick during the event but it didn't hit Magnus hard until afterwards. As they drove through Greece, Magnus lay in the back seat, weak and unable to hold food or drink. In Crete they were finally able to get to a chemist and get a syrup that helped, but after three days of illness Magnus was famished and listless and barely managed the short trip from hotel to playing hall.

His parents were not sure that Magnus should play chess in this condition, but on the day before the tournament his fever had broken and he felt much better. He had more energy and was especially eager to play. The fear of missing a game had obviously set his immune system in gear. His parents gave in, also out of consideration to the rest of the team, even if Magnus was not at all in good shape, looking thin and tousled.

Magnus was placed on first board ahead of grandmasters Berge Østenstad and Jonathan Tisdall, which attracted some attention, but the club wanted to give Magnus the chance to take a GM-norm. Those who had seen Magnus knew how strong he was, so the board order was justifiable. It was also good for Magnus to get some real sparring.

And he got just that in the first round with black against European champion Emil Sutovsky (2639) from Israel. He equalised with Alekhine's Defence but was gradually worn down in an endgame. In the next game he took care of IM Kalle Kiik (2439) from Estonia using simple means.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Kalle Kiik
Rethymnon 2003

1.e4 ♘c6 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 ♗g4
Black is out to confuse but, in my opinion,

normal variations are more rewarding. There are always opportunities to complicate later. **5.d5 ♗xf3** 5...♘e5 is interesting. White is just a bit better after 6.♘xe5 ♗xd1 7.♗b5+ c6 8.dxc6 dxe5 9.c7+ ♕d7 10.♗xd7 ♔xd7 11.♔xd1 ♔xc7. **6.♕xf3 ♘e5 7.♕g3** White's advantage is obvious with the bishop pair and rapid development. **7...c6 8.f4 ♘ed7 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.e5! ♘d5** After 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♘d5 12.♘xd5 cxd5 White gets a strong initiative with 13.e6! fxe6 14.♗d3, but the game continuation is absolutely hideous for Black. **11.exd6 exd6 12.♘xd5 cxd5** The doubled pawn is not pretty. **13.♗d2 ♗e7**

14.♕xg7 Magnus has several good continuations but chooses to steer the game into a superior ending. **14...♗f6 15.♕h6 ♗xb2 16.♖b1 ♕f6** Otherwise White gets a mating attack. **17.♕xf6 ♗xf6 18.♗b5!** White has a decisive advantage. **18...♗d4 19.♔d1 0-0-0 20.♖e1!** All pieces are brought into play. **20...♗b6 21.♖e7 f6 22.a4!** White has an attack even without queens on the board. **22...♘c5 23.a5 ♗c7 24.♗c6!** Black is caught in a vice. **24...♖dg8 25.♗xd5 ♖e8 26.♖f7 h5 27.a6** Black had had enough and resigned.

After this, Magnus easily held a draw as White against super-GM and former child prodigy Luke McShane from England in a complicated Sveshnikov Sicilian. Against Belgian GM Luc Winants (2501) Magnus found himself in the unaccustomed role of defender.

□ **Luc Winants**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Rethymnon 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 ♘e4 3.♗f4 d5 4.e3 c5 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.dxc5 ♘c6 7.♗b5 It is not easy to say who has won or lost a tempo, but Magnus was happy enough with an initiative for the sacrificed pawn. **7...e6 8.b4 ♗d7 9.c3 a5 10.♕b3 axb4 11.cxb4 ♘e4 12.♘c3 ♕f6 13.♘ge2**

13...♘xf2!? The position gets exciting. **14.0-0!** Necessary since 14.♔xf2 g5 gives Black fine play. **14...♘g4 15.h3 ♘ge5 16.♘a4 ♘c4 17.e4!** Winants is up to the task and sacrifices another pawn for a strong attack. **17...♘d4 18.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 19.♘xd4 ♕xd4+ 20.♔h1 ♕xe4 21.♖ae1?!** After 21.♖ad1 Magnus should be lost. White threatens 22.♘c3 and taking on c4 and neither 21...♔c8 22.♕xc4! nor 21...♔e8 22.♘c3 ♕g6 23.♘b5 give Black hope of survival. **21...♕g6** Now it is not so clear. **22.♖c1 ♔e8 23.♖xc4 dxc4 24.♕xc4 e5 25.♘b6 ♖a3?** Magnus is not

CHARLEY ANSOFF

Magnus in his first game against Garry Kasparov. The number one in the world rankings got into trouble but managed to escape with a draw. Undoubtedly much to his relief, Kasparov won the second game quite easily.

ASKER BÆRUMS BUDSTIKKE

Her gir Karpov opp

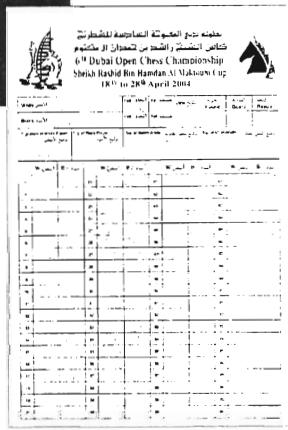
Magnus (13) knuste sjakkverdensmester

The Norwegian press had a field day with the historic moments from Reykjavik. Karpov's chivalrous resignation made the front page.

Magnus was highly annoyed by his weak play in the second game against Kasparov. His unforgettable comment: 'I played like a child'.

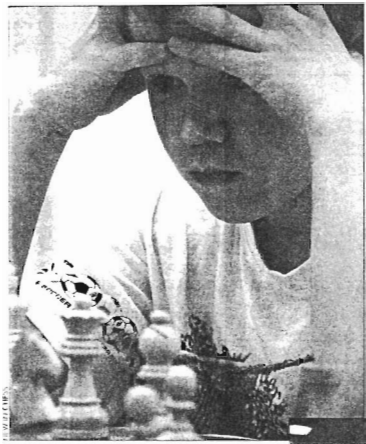
In Dubai it was too hot to play football outside. Fortunately there was table football in the hotel. Among the spectators (with tie) is tournament winner and good friend of the Carlsens, Shakhriyaz Mamedyarov.

The third and final grandmaster norm is in the bag! Magnus is the centre of attention at the prize-giving in Dubai.



6th Dubai Open Chess Championship
Sheikh Rashid Bin Hamdan Al Maktoum Cup
18th to 28th April 2004

The score-sheet of his brilliant win against Evgeny Vladimirov. The former second of Kasparov compared Magnus with his old boss and predicted a future as the best player in the world for him.



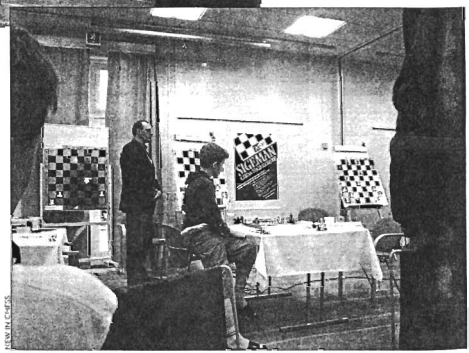
Immediately after Dubai the Sigeman tournament was waiting. There was no time to recover, but Magnus was hungry enough for more and posted another grandmaster result.

During the first half of the Sigeman tournament father Henrik and the girls enjoyed a holiday in Dubai. Here Magnus, and a box of raisins, is delivered to the playing hall by his mother Sigrun. At this point the rest of the family were already on their way to Copenhagen and she knows that soon she will get a break from goalkeeping on the football field.

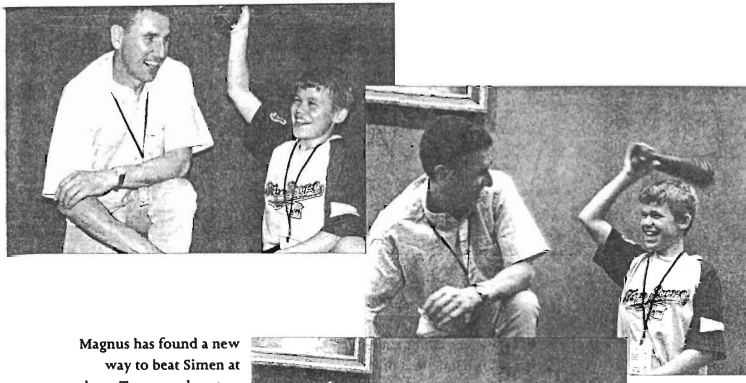
The Carlsens reunited at the closing dinner of the Sigeman tournament.

That's the way. Three victories from the Sigeman tournament: Peter Heine Nielsen, the tallest grandmaster in the world, resigns his game against the youngest GM around.

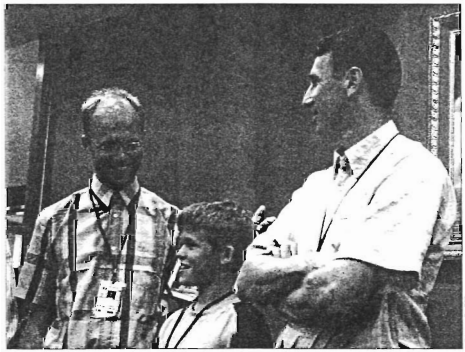
American GM Nick de Firmian is looking for the right moment to lay down his sword.



Magnus is awaiting the return of Nordic champion Evgeny Agrest, who will soon admit the hopelessness of his position.



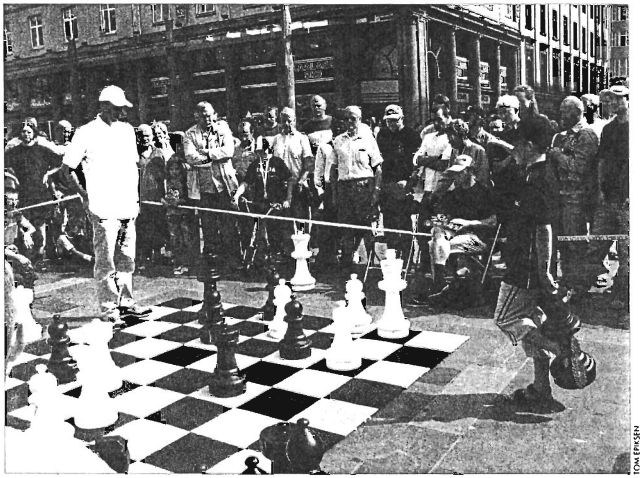
Magnus has found a new way to beat Simen at chess. Two grandmasters from Norway are having fun in the lobby of the Almahary hotel in Tripoli.



Henrik also appears in front of the camera, when Magnus receives a further token of recognition from the Libyan organizers.

The summer of 2004 was easily filled with more chess. Here Magnus sits watching as Simen Agdestein goes over a game together with GM Rune Djurhuus.

Simen and Magnus playing open-air chess in the centre of Bergen. This game Simen would win, but the next one was for Magnus. In the evening they both competed in the notorious 'café chess', which this time was easy pickings for Magnus. He won all six of his games and Simen was one of the victims.



TOM EFTSEN

a born defender. After 25...♖d8! his position is still hanging together. **26.♗xe5 ♕e6 27.♖e1!** A nasty move. After 27...♕xc4 28.♘xc4 White wins one of the rooks. **27...♗e7 28.♕b5+ ♔f8 29.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 30.♖xe6 fxe6 31.♕d7** Black's forces are too poorly coordinated to put up resistance. **31...♔f6 32.♕d4+ e5 33.♕h4+ ♔f7 34.♕h5+ ♔g7 35.♘d5** Black resigned.

Yet again Magnus picked himself up and bounced back with a win, this time against IM Can Arduman (2325) from Turkey. But against Veljko Jeremic (2467) in round six Magnus committed a real howler.

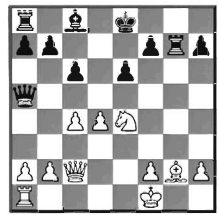
□ **Veljko Jeremic**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Rethymnon 2003

17...bxc5?? After 17...dxc5 nothing special is happening. **18.♖xb8 ♕xb8 19.e5!** Ouch! White wins a piece. Magnus fought on a bit but lost after **19...♘g4 20.♗xc6 ♘xe5 21.♗g2 ♕b4 22.♖b1 ♕a5 23.♘e4 f5 24.♗d2 ♕c7 25.♘g5 ♖e8 26.♖b7 ♕c8 27.♕b1 h6 28.♘xe6!** 1-0 Black's queen is pinned one way or another if he takes on e6.

The concluding win over grandmaster and former world junior champion Helgi Ass Gretarsson (2513) from Iceland hinted at Magnus' potential.

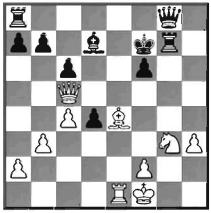
□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Helgi Ass Gretarsson**
Rethymnon 2003

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♕c2 ♗d6 7.g4!? Magnus adopts the latest fashion. **7...♘xg4 8.♖g1 ♕f6 9.♖xg4 ♕xf3 10.♖xg7 ♘f6** It is more usual to play 10...♘f8 threatening to trap the rook with 11...♘g6. **11.♗g2** It is safer to bring the rook home. **11...♕h5 12.e4 dxe4 13.♗g5 ♗f8!** Magnus had seen this possibility but had not noticed Black's 16th move. **14.♗xf6 ♗xg7 15.♗xg7 ♖g8 16.♘xe4 ♕a5+! 17.♔f1 ♖xg7** Black has won the exchange but Magnus has very active pieces and is in his element.



18.♕c1! ♕d8 19.♕f4 ♔f8 20.♕e5 ♖g6 21.♕h8+ ♔e7 22.♕xh7 ♕g8? After 22...♕xd4! it is questionable that Magnus would have been able to conjure up compensation for his missing material. **23.♕h4+ f6 24.♗f3!** Practical play. **24...e5** It is understandable that the Icelandic GM didn't like the complications after

24...♖g1+ 25.♔e2 ♖xa1 26.♘xf6!. **25.b3** The c-pawn was hanging. **25...exd4 26.♘g3 ♗g4 27.♖e1+ ♔f7 28.♗e4 ♖g7 29.h3 ♗d7** 29...♗e6 was necessary. **30.♕h5+ ♔f8 31.♕c5+ ♔f7**



32.♗g6+! Lovely! Black can choose how to be mated next move, but instead he resigned.

The best teams in these championships field teams of incredible strength with an average rating of well over 2600. Garry Kasparov was among the big guns playing in the same hall, which is an event for any chess player but even more for a boy of twelve. Asker had no chance in such company and had to settle for 31st place in the field of 45 teams.

I met Jonathan Tisdall shortly after the tournament and asked how Magnus had played. 'Nothing special, he just performed around 2500,' was the reply. Magnus had felt terrible but still turned in a solid performance with 3½ out of 7 on the first and toughest board. Magnus played in Crete like a strong international master even if he was in a terrible physical state. He was probably grandmaster strength already – he just needed to recover a bit. This reminded me of what former Olympic team member Sverre Heim often said: 'One doesn't need to feel well to play well.' I have thought about this many times. One rarely feels completely fit, at least not during chess tournaments where one struggles to fall asleep, plagued by irritation over bad moves.

There were now two weeks before Magnus's next event, the Youth world championships in Halkidiki. But before the family retraced their steps they would relax completely. The schedule was hectic enough, and why leave Crete? Here there were endless beaches and it was a fantastic place to rest. They only needed to find an apartment nearby and get away from it all by swimming, jogging on the beach and doing homework.

In general the Carlsens lived well and had expenses partially covered during tournaments, but between events they had to settle for something humbler. For the children this was just as much fun. But the kids had to pay a price for this holiday existence, and this was a cultural trip to Knossos, the ruins of the first European civilisation, from about 5,000-6,000 years ago. This sparked a protest, but parental pressure won out, and a report on the visit became the next homework assignment.

After twelve hedonistic days in Crete it was time to take a ferry to the mainland and Athens, where Magnus' paternal grandparents were coincidentally on holiday for a few days. The reunion was joyous, so much so that a trip to the Acropolis, Greece's mightiest cultural landmark, didn't cause a murmur of dissent.

On the way north to Halkidiki there was time to stop off at Mount Olympus,

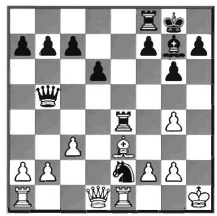
home of the Greek gods, 500 kilometres north of Athens. Unfortunately the tourist season had ended five days earlier and there was no place open to stay here until Christmas. So the family had to settle for parking at 1,300 metres above sea level and pottering around. The path to the 2,900 metre high peak was scattered with abandoned cabins and resting places and a steady stream of workers descended the mountain on their way to their two month holiday break. Zeus and the rest of the Greek gods made it to the Carlsen curriculum.

Three days before the World Youth they arrived at the Athos Palace Hotel, the venue on Kalitea, the southernmost of the three peninsulas that make up Halkidiki.

Our main character, still one of the youngest in the Boys U-14, started the event properly, with 3½ from the first four rounds. I met the Australian GM Ian Rogers in a tournament in Benidorm, Spain just afterwards, and he said that he had only seen Magnus play in the first round, but that Magnus had impressed enormously with a brilliant queen sacrifice. Unfortunately, the other Norwegian competitor in this class, Jon Ludvig Hammer, was sitting across the board in this game. (Because of Magnus' silver medal in the same event in 2002 Norway received two places in this class.)

□ **Jon Ludvig Hammer**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Halkidiki 2003

1.♘f3 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘bd2 g6 4.e4 ♗g7 5.♗d3 0-0 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.c3 e5 8.h3 ♘h5 9.dxe5 ♘f4 Magnus can already chase the initiative. **10.♗b5 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♕g5!** 11...dxe5 gives a normal position. **12.♘g4 ♕xb5 13.♘b3 ♘e2+!** Energetic play. **14.♔h1 ♗xg4 15.hxg4 ♖ae8!** Black has evil plans. **16.♗e3?** 16.a4 is more exciting. **16...♖xe4 17.♖e1** Jon Ludvig has not noticed what Magnus has in store for him.



17...♕h5+! 1-0 18.gxh5 ♖h4 is a nice mate.

Magnus continued to romp in round two, beating Andre Diamant (2149) from Brazil with another delectable queen sacrifice.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Andre Diamant**
Halkidiki 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.c4 ♘f6 Developing this knight to e7 is sharper. **6.♘c3 d6 7.♘c2 ♗g7 8.♗e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♗d2 ♘c5 11.b4 ♘e6** Magnus would happily play the position a pawn down after 11...♗xc3 12.♗xc3 ♘xe4 13.♗b2. **12.♖c1 ♘ed4 13.♘xd4 ♘xd4 14.♗e3** 14.♗d3 was interesting. **14...♘xe2+ 15.♕xe2 a5 16.b5 ♗xc3** Diamant hopes to hold a draw by gaining bishops of opposite colour. **17.♖xc3 f6** Also after 17...b6 18.e5! dxe5 19.♗h6

♖e8 20.♕xe5 f6 21.♕e4 White has a strong initiative. **18.c5! dxc5 19.♖d1 ♕e8 20.♗h6!** Most people would have taken back on c5, but Magnus is far more concerned with keeping his pieces active. **20...♖f7 21.♕c4!** Black does not get the time to put his bishop on e6. **21...e5** 21...b6 22.♖cd3 ♗b7 23.♖d7 ♖b8 was a better chance. **22.♖d6! ♗d7 23.a4 ♖c8 24.♖cd3 ♔h8 25.h3 ♖c7** Diamant misses Magnus' plan. **26.b6 ♖c8**

27.♕xf7! ♕xf7 28.♖xd7 ♕g8 29.♖c7! Black is bound and gagged. **29...♕e6 30.♖dd7 ♖xc7** Black is lost anyway. **31.♖d8+** 1-0

In the third round Magnus got into trouble as Black in a King's Indian Defence against Damian Lemos (2218) from Argentina. He lost a pawn, then another, but still nearly managed to win the ending thanks to a formidable bishop pair. Only an inaccuracy near the end prevented a perfect start.

In round four there were no inaccuracies. Magnus won solidly against Teddy Coleman (2275) from the USA as White in a Sicilian Dragon. Black got in the classic exchange sacrifice on c3 but Magnus had learned from a defeat in a similar game against GM Rune Djurhuus and showed how this type of position should be handled.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Teddy Coleman**
Halkidiki 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 ♘c6 **8.♕d2 ♗d7** The latest news. Before 8...d5 was considered obligatory. **9.0-0-0 0-0 10.g4 ♖c8 11.h4 ♘e5 12.♗e2** 12.h5 ♕a5 13.♔b1 ♖xc3 14.♕xc3 ♕xc3 15.bxc3 ♘xf3! 16.♘xf3 ♗xg4 17.♗g2 ♘xe4 is a scary variation for White. **12...♕a5 13.♔b1 ♖xc3** This is standard in such positions. Black usually gets sufficient compensation. **14.♕xc3 ♕xc3 15.bxc3 ♖c8 16.♔b2 ♘c4+ 17.♗xc4 ♖xc4 18.h5 a6 19.hxg6 fxg6 20.♖h4!** Magnus was very satisfied with this move, but I have to confess that I don't remember or see the point. **20...b5 21.♖d3 a5 22.♘b3 a4 23.♘d2 ♖c8 24.♗d4 ♗e6**

25.e5! After this White is just a safe exchange ahead. **25...♘d5 26.exd6 exd6 27.♗xg7 ♔xg7 28.a3 ♖c6 29.g5!** Finally the rook on h4 enters the game. **29...♘b6 30.♖hd4 d5 31.♖b4** ♘c4+ 31...♖c5 32.♖e3 also wins easily. **32.♘xc4 dxc4 33.♖e3 ♖b6 34.♖e5** Black resigned.

I remember sitting at home and watching the games live on the Internet, but I could not fathom what was going on in Magnus' fifth round game. He emerged clearly better against Wang Hao (2215) from China, but suddenly Magnus lost the exchange and everything unravelled.

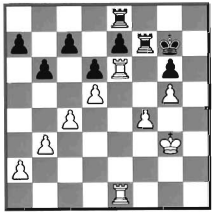
Later I learned that Magnus had come down with a virus and had a severe fever of over 40°C. This is typical of such championships with hundreds of players from every corner of the world and the air buzzing with bacteria. It tends to start with a small cough in a corner of the playing hall, then it snowballs and one has to be lucky to escape.

Magnus was down and out for the next three days, spending about 20 hours a day in bed and only dragging himself up for the games. He was a sad sight, wrapped in a blanket with a box of raisins next to his head, which he rested by the side of the board. But as we have seen, you don't always have to feel well to play well. Magnus continued to collect points from strong players.

Against Russian Pavel Potapov (2267) in round six Magnus got in the thematic break e2-e4 in the Leningrad variation of the Dutch Defence and won the ending smoothly.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Pavel Potapov
Halkidiki 2003

1.d4 f5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 d6 7.♘c3 ♕e8 8.♖e1 ♕f7 Earlier this was meant to give Black equality but Magnus has come armed with some newer ideas. **9.b3 ♘e4 10.♗b2 ♘c6 11.♖c1 h6** 11...e5 creates a different type of position: **12.d5 ♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♗xe5 14.f4 ♗g7 15.♕c2 ♘xc3 16.♗xc3 ♗d7 17.e4** Magnus has secured a comfortable advantage with simple play. **17...♗xc3 18.♕xc3 fxe4 19.♖xe4 ♗f5 20.♖e3 b6 21.♖ce1 ♖ae8 22.♗e4 ♗d7 23.♗f3 ♕f6 24.♕d3 ♔g7 25.♕e2** White has prevented an advance of the e-pawn and can calmly continue to squeeze Black. **25...♖f7 26.♗g4** After the trade of bishops White can plant a rook on e6. **26...♗f5 27.♗xf5 ♕xf5 28.♔g2 h5 29.♖e6 ♔f8 30.h3 h4** This eases White's task. **31.♕g4 ♕xg4** After 31...hxg3 Magnus had planned 32.♔xg3. **32.hxg4 hxg3 33.♔xg3 ♔g7 34.g5!**



Black is in zugzwang. **34...♖h8** Black soon runs out of pawn moves on the queenside and after 34...♔h7 White wins with 35.♖h1+ ♔g7 36.♖h6. **35.♖xe7 a5 36.♖e8 ♖xe8 37.♖xe8 ♔h7 38.♔g4 ♔g7 39.♖e6!** Black is soon in zugzwang again. **39...♔h7 40.♖f6 ♖e7 41.f5 gxf5+ 42.♔xf5 ♔g7 43.♖g6+ ♔f7 44.♖e6** Black is not allowed a glimmer of counterplay. **44...♖d7 45.g6+ ♔g7 46.♔g5 ♔g8 47.♖e8+ ♔g7 48.♔f5** For the third time Black is left without a reasonable move at his disposition. **48...c5 49.♔e6** The absolute simplest. **49...♖a7 50.♖e7+!** Black resigned.

Magnus also impressed in the seventh round with a very finely judged pawn sacrifice against Jonatan Dourerassou (2250) from France, yet another example of his flair for weighing piece activity against material.

□ **Jonatan Dourerassou**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Halkidiki 2003

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3 dxc4 6.♕xc4 0-0 7.e4 ♘c6 8.♗e3 ♗g4 9.♖d1 ♘d7 10.♕b3 ♘b6 11.d5 ♘e5 12.♗e2 ♘xf3+ 13.gxf3 ♗h5 14.♖g1 ♕d6 14...♕d7 or 14...♕c8 is more common. **15.f4 ♗xe2 16.♔xe2 c6!** This costs a pawn but Black can afford this considering White's exposed king position and his delicate central pawn structure. **17.e5 ♕d7 18.♗xb6 axb6 19.♕xb6 ♕f5 20.dxc6 bxc6 21.♕e3 ♗h6 22.♖d4 c5 23.♖c4 ♖fd8** White will never have peace with such an insecure king. **24.♖d1 ♖xd1 25.♔xd1 ♖d8+ 26.♔c1** Else Black comes in with his queen to c2. **26...♕g4 27.♔c2 ♕f5+ 28.♔c1**

28...♖d4! 29.♖xd4 cxd4 30.♕xd4 ♗xf4+ 31.♔d1 ♗xe5 32.♕d8+ ♔g7 33.♕xe7 ♗xh2 The bishop is superior to the knight in this position but even more relevant is White's continuing problem with king safety. **34.♕h4 ♕d3+ 35.♔c1 ♗e5 36.♘d1 h5 37.a4 ♗f6 38.♕f4 h4 39.♘e3 ♕e2!** Black has both a dangerous h-pawn and a powerful mating attack. **40.b4 ♗b2+ 41.♔b1 ♗c3 42.♘f5+** Desperation. **42...gxf5 43.♕g5+ ♔f8** Black easily escapes the checks. **44.♕h6+ ♗g7 45.♕d6+ ♕e7 46.♕b8+ ♕e8 47.♕f4 ♕e4+** White resigned.

Now Magnus was turning up with a bottle of cola alongside his box of raisins. Before the game with the Frenchman he had taken half a painkiller and his blood sugar was likely dipping. The careful Carlsens are normally very cautious about sweets, so a cola during a Magnus game means a crisis.

No matter the state of his health, the following game against Armenian Zaven Andriasian (2311) was brilliant.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Zaven Andriasian**
Halkidiki 2003

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗f5 6.♘h4 e6 7.♘xf5 exf5 8.e3 ♗d6 8...♗b4 is normal. **9.♗xc4 0-0 10.♕f3!?** Magnus chooses an exciting plan. **10...g6 11.h3 h5** If Black thought that he was stopping the advance of the g-pawn with this move, he was sorely mistaken. **12.♗d2 ♘bd7 13.0-0-0 a6 14.g4!** White arrives first. **14...fxg4 15.hxg4 hxg4 16.♕g2 b5 17.♗a2 c5 18.♘e4** It was also possible to play for mate on the h-file with 18.♖h6. **18...♕e7 19.♘xd6 ♕xd6 20.dxc5** White's king position also looks exposed but his attack is faster, for example: 20...♕xc5+ 21.♗c3! b4 22.♖xd7 bxc3 23.♖xf7! (23...♖xf7

24.♕xa8+) and White's entire army takes part in the offensive. **20...♕e7 21.♗c3 ♖ac8**

22.♖xd7! A lovely finish. **22...♕xc5 23.♔b1 b4 24.♕xg4** 24.♗xf6 was also possible, but Magnus likes an elegant finish. 1-0

After this round Magnus' fever broke. He had weathered this illness and was in the leading group with 6½ points with three rounds left to play. It was time for a showdown with the highest rated player and reigning European champion, Sergey Zhigalko (2460) from Belarus.

Magnus was well prepared and got a fine position out of the opening phase but suddenly ran out of energy. This can't happen in a sport where a moment's loss of concentration can ruin everything. In a critical phase Magnus gave away his extra pawn, then the initiative and finally blundered away a piece.

Magnus was only interested in gold, and after this he lost steam. Nevertheless he produced another fine game in the next round with black in the Breyer Variation of the Ruy Lopez against Gogineni Rohit from India. But when learning that the best possible outcome of the final round was the bronze, he lost interest. He finished with an uninspired effort and a loss against Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi (2447), the winner of both the world and European classes the previous year.

With 7½/11 Magnus finished in ninth place. His rating performance was 2407, which was a bit under par. He had played some fine games and learned how hard it is to win such youth tournaments. Something unexpected is almost certain to happen and if you are to go all the way to the top, things need to fall into place – no matter how strong a player you are. In any case, there is a lot of pressure, even more so when you are the favourite.

In July, when Magnus received an invitation to compete in the Claude Pecaut Memorial tournament in the beautiful resort of Taormina in Sicily in November, he accepted on the condition that the event qualified for a grandmaster norm. Magnus had just achieved the IM title and was ready for new goals.

The organisers had to express regrets that they had no budget for such a strong event. But in September they could happily get in touch again. GMs Michel Godena (2523) and Lexy Ortega (2462) from Italy and Karen Movisisian (2475) from Armenia had agreed to play. Magnus was now ranked number four in the field with his rating of 2450. The average of the ten participants was 2406 and the GM-norm was 7/9.

The tournament began twelve days after Halkidiki, so it was time to drive south and a bit west. A boat took them from Greece to Brindisi in Italy, which reduced the distance considerably. In Italy it was warm and hazy and the family looked forward to visiting one of the world's most

beautiful holiday spots – Taormina attracts a million tourists a year.

They arrived in Sicily a week early in good spirits and found a camping cottage at Naxos, the site of the first Greek settlements from 600-700 BC. The landscape was luxuriant and lovely, with the volcano Etna looming in the background. The Carlsens tried to drive up to the 3,300 meter peak but at the 1,500 mark found their way blocked by an enormous amount of lava from the previous eruption a year earlier. It was as if a ten-metre deep river had crossed the road and frozen into an unsurpassable barrier. On the other side the road continued as if nothing had happened, but with no cars.

Their mood improved even more when they arrived at the hotel that would be home and venue. Claude Pecaut, to whom the tournament was dedicated, was a former hotelier who had been passionately devoted to chess. He had also put his soul into his hotel. The 'Belle Vedere' – Beautiful View – deserved its name, hugging a cliff face over the Mediterranean and boasting a garden filled with orange trees. The Carlsens could not imagine another place on earth they would rather be at that moment. Again the only blot on the landscape was their own battered car.

Magnus was still worn out after his hardships in Greece. His father was constantly wondering if the schedule was too tough, but it was not so easy to pull out of a closed tournament either. Instead they asked Magnus to try and play some short draws at the beginning, but this was something he just couldn't do. He came out fighting hard in the first round with white in a razor-sharp Sicilian Dragon against IM Costantino Aldrovandi (2414), but his attack backfired and he lost in just 27 moves. He played solidly for the rest of the event, and with five draws and three wins split 2-5 place with 5½ points and a rating performance of 2481.

His game against IM Zivojn Ljubisavljevic (2316) from Serbia and Montenegro was typical for the event. Magnus did not try for much. He played simply and solidly but didn't avoid a fight if he got the chance. Against Ljubisavljevic he got a massive central pawn storm.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Zivojn Ljubisavljevic**
Taormina 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♗d7 4.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 5.c4 It is not easy to get an advantage like this, especially after Black's next move. **5...e5 6.♘c3 ♘c6 7.d3 g6 8.a3 h5** Black wants to trade dark squared bishops, but 8...♗g7 is completely OK. White's bishop is not better than Black's. **9.0-0 ♗h6 10.♗e3 ♔f8 11.b4 b6 12.♘d5 ♔g7 13.♘g5 ♗xg5** After this White is clearly better. When the position eventually opens up the bishop will come into its own. **14.♗xg5 f6 15.♗e3 ♘ge7 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.f4 exf4 18.♗xf4 ♘xd5 19.cxd5 ♘e5 20.♖a2 ♖ae8 21.h3 ♖hf8 22.♖af2 ♕e7 23.♕d2 g5** This weakens Black's king position even more. **24.♗h2 c4 25.d4 ♘d3 26.♖e2 ♔g6** Black had to at least take on a3, either here or next move, to have some material comfort for his troubles. He cannot just sit back and watch White's pawns roll in. **27.♕e3 ♕d7 28.d6 b5 29.h4 ♕g4** After 29...gxh4 30.♖f5 Black's king is vulnerable. **30.hxg5 fxg5**

31.♖xf8 ♖xf8 32.e5! The pawns go in by themselves. **32...♕e6 33.♕e4+ ♔h6 34.d5 ♕f7 35.♕f3 ♕g7 36.♕h3 h4 37.d7 ♔h5**

38.♗g3! Magnus elegantly parries Black's attempts at counterplay. **38...♕f7 39.♔h2 ♕f1 40.♖e4!** White is the one attacking here. **40...♘f4 41.♖xf4! gxf4 42.♕xh4+ ♔g6 43.♕g4+ ♔h7 44.♕h5+ ♔g7 45.♗h4** Black resigned.

Magnus was nowhere near the GM-norm of seven points but it was an excellent family holiday. They found a football pitch nearby and some nice places to eat where the kids could feast on pizza and spaghetti. They even absorbed a bit of culture with a visit to an old theatre and a monastery, and learned how ten foreign powers had taken control over Taormina since the first Greeks came over 2,500 years ago.

When Magnus got an invitation to return the year after, his sisters put pressure on him but he preferred to play first board for one of the teams in Spain's top division.

There was only a month left until Christmas after Taormina, and that was something the Carlsen family intended to celebrate with Norwegian snow – time to plan the route home. A stop in Budapest for one of the famous First Saturday tournaments was perfect, and they had 10-12 days to reach the December edition, the first Saturday being the 6th.

They stopped in Rome to see the Colosseum, the Forum Romanum and other ancient monuments. There were quickly too many ruins for the children, but the enormous size of St. Peter's Cathedral was a hit with them. Magnus turned thirteen in Rome. His birthday present was a trip to watch football giants Lazio play.

The trip had been rich with experiences and no one had missed their desk at school, and no one believed that friends at home had learned more there.

In Budapest they arranged a downtown flat through the mother of one of Magnus' opponents in the European and World youth championships from the year before, David Berczes. David Howell, Magnus' contemporary from England, was also playing in the 14-man GM group.

Magnus started with 1½/2 against these two in the first two rounds and followed up with a crushing win over IM Lorenz Drabke (2449) from Germany.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Lorenz Drabke
Budapest 2003

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗f5 6.♘h4 ♗d7 A cheeky system. **7.e3 b5** This was the original idea behind the variation, but as Beliavsky demonstrated against Magnus in the Sigeman tournament six months later, 7...e6 8.♗xc4 c5!? is playable. **8.♘f3 ♕b6?** Black's idea to protect c4 is risky and re-

quires pinpoint accuracy. After this Black has difficulties. Instead, 8...e6 was necessary. **9.♘e5 ♗c8** This makes things even worse but after 9...e6 10.♕f3 was strong. **10.axb5 cxb5**

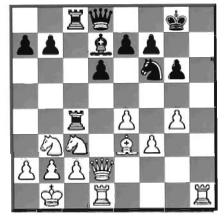
11.♘xb5! It isn't surprising that there is a combination when you look at Black's sad development. **11...♕xb5 12.♗xc4 ♕b7 13.♗xf7+ ♔d8 14.♗d2** The Black king is doomed. **14...e6 15.♗a5+ ♔e7 16.♕a4** White threatens mate with 17.♕a3+. **16...♘d5 17.♕e8+ ♔f6 18.♘g4+ ♔g5** 18...♔f5 19.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 20.e4+ also leads to mate. **19.h4+ ♔xg4 20.♗xe6+** Black resigned. The black king will be mated on h5.

After a lucky win against women's GM Szidonia Vajda (2360) from Hungary in the fifth round Magnus had 3½ points. Attention began to focus on the GM-norm.

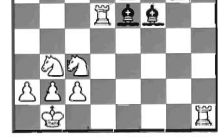
After his good start Magnus lost against IM Sergey Kayumov (2434) from Uzbekistan in the sixth round and then Peter Horvath (2457) from Hungary in the eighth. Suddenly the GM norm was not possible any more. This meant that Magnus could just play chess again and he then won a fine game against IM Timothy Taylor (2385) from the USA in round nine.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Timothy Taylor**
Budapest 2003

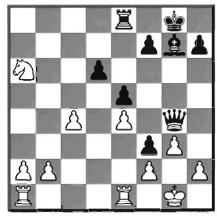
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0 ♗d7 10.g4 ♕a5 11.♔b1 ♖fc8 12.h4 ♘e5 13.♗e2 ♘c4 In the World youth championships just before Magnus won with white after 13...♖xc3 14.♕xc3 bxc3. 13...♘c4 is riskier. **14.♗xc4 ♖xc4 15.h5 ♖ac8 16.♘b3 ♕d8 17.hxg6 hxg6**



18.e5! After this White is already winning. **18...♘xg4** 18...dxe5 19.g5 loses a piece. **19.fxg4 ♗xg4 20.♕h2 ♗xe5** 20...♗xd1 21.♕h7+ ♔f8 22.♗h6 leads to mate. **21.♕h7+ ♔f8 22.♗d4! ♖xd4** Black cannot surrender his dark squared bishop but now White gets a whole rook for the pawns. **23.♖xd4 ♗f5 24.♖d5 e6**



25.♖xe5! Magnus wants to win by attack. **25...dxe5 26.♕h8+ ♔e7 27.♕xe5 ♕d6 28.♕e3 ♔f6** The king lives a restless life. **29.♘d2! ♕e5 30.♘de4+ ♗xe4 31.♘xe4+ ♔e7 32.♕a3+ ♔d7 33.♖d1+ ♔c6 34.♕a4+ ♔b6 35.♕b4+ ♔a6 36.♖d3!** Tightening the mating net. **36...b6 37.♘d6 ♖c5 38.♖a3+ ♖a5 39.♕c4+** Black resigned.



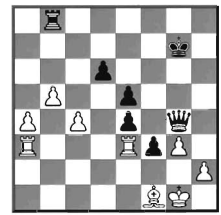
His finish was solid, with draws against three grandmasters and a sophisticated win in the last round over IM Gergely Antal (2473).

□ **Gergely Antal**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Budapest 2003

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.♘d5 ♗g7 11.♗d3 ♘e7 12.♘xe7 ♕xe7 13.0-0 0-0 14.c4 f5 15.♕f3 ♖e8 16.♖fe1 b4 17.♘c2 f4 It is not easy to understand this variation, but there is no doubt that Black has a wealth of original ideas. **18.♘xb4**

18...♖b8! 19.♘c6 Black also has attacking chances after 19.♘d5 ♕g5 20.♗f1 ♖e6!. **19...♕g5 20.♘xb8 ♗g4 21.♕xg4 ♕xg4 22.♘xa6 f3 23.g3**

A strange position has arisen. White probably stands better, but Magnus manages to punch holes in White's king position in miraculous fashion before the queenside pawns arrive for coronation. **23...♗h6 24.♘c7 ♖b8 25.♘d5 ♗g5 26.b4 h5 27.a4** After the prophylactic 27.♗f1 it is not easy to see how Black continues the attack. At least 27...h4 28.h3 and 29.g3 leads nowhere. **27...h4 28.♖a3?** A meaningless move. **28...♔g7 29.♘e3?!** After this Black finally gets to break up White's light squared blockade. **29...♗xe3 30.♖xe3 hxg3 31.fxg3 f5!** Now White comes completely undone. **32.♗f1** Black also invades after 32.exf5 ♖xb4. **32...fxe4 33.b5**



33...f2+! Ending any white dreams of achieving a blockade. **34.♔xf2 ♕d1 35.♔g2 ♖f8 36.♗e2 ♕e1 37.♖xe4 ♖f2+ 38.♔h3 ♕h1!** White's defensive idea was

38...♖xe2 39.♖g4+ and White has perpetual check. **39.♖g4+ ♔f6 40.♖f3+ ♖xf3 41.♗xf3 ♕xf3 42.♔h4** Black threatened 42...♔f5. **42...♕f5 43.♔h3 e4! 44.b6 e3 45.b7 ♕h7+!** White's hope on b7 falls. White resigned.

Magnus ended up in fifth place with 8/13, 1½ points shy of the GM-norm but still far ahead of his rivals of the same age, and good for a rating performance of 2512.

The tournament ended on 19 December. The roads were still clear in Hungary but weather reports warned of snow starting to fall further north. So they piled into the car and headed for home, hoping to avoid the worst. They had at least 400 kilos of baggage and had not had room to bring winter tires along.

Going through Germany went fine, as did the ferry from Putgarten to Rødby, Denmark. In Denmark there is rarely a danger of snow, but in Gothenburg the flurries were falling in earnest. The drive went well until the final stretch. Instead of taking the usual four hours, it took ten, with several forced stops to wait for snowploughs. When they finally made it home to grandparents in Asker three days before Christmas, they had driven nearly 30 hours in a row.

On 23 December I got the chance to analyse some of the six months worth of games with Magnus. We had not managed to do much when Henrik suddenly appeared at the agreed time – three hours later – to pick Magnus up. Magnus was somewhat irritated by the interruption. There would be chances in the future, but when? After Christmas they were travelling to grandparents in Solør, so Magnus suggested the next day, and had to be reminded that it was Christmas Eve – the high point of Norway's Yuletide celebrations.

I had seen enough not to be surprised by what would happen in the next six months. The tour had given Magnus the strength of a strong grandmaster. Soon, the rest of the world would learn this as well.

8 Grandmaster!

January-May 2004

'This is real talent!'
– Alexander Nikitin, Kasparov's former trainer, on Magnus.

During the autumn Magnus had gone up about 100 rating points, from 2346 to 2461 on the Norwegian list and from 2385 to 2484 on the international, FIDE list, which is a great deal. Suddenly he was ranked number six in Norway, behind five grandmasters and ahead of one. There was plenty of praise, but neither Magnus nor his family felt as if he had done anything special recently. His results had only been so-so and he had struggled a lot with illness and fatigue. Three relaxing weeks in Norway would turn out to work wonders.

After our analysis session just before Christmas there were a few quiet days of watching TV and the usual post-Christmas rituals at his maternal grandparents' home in Solør, near the Swedish border. Magnus gradually recharged his batteries. The first week of school of the new year he stopped in at NTG's chess course and was very impressive. One thing learnt by experience from the rigours of the autumn tour was that Magnus needed more rest between the tougher events. The rest of the family also felt that constant travel was a bit of a strain, so the next semester in the year-long sabbatical was going to be structured differently.

Their house was still rented out until the first of July, so the Carlsens did not have a home, but kind grandparents could put them up and it was also possible to live in a cabin, either in the mountains or by the sea. So now they had their base in Norway and flew to tournaments instead of driving around in their aging van. The first stop would be the famous Corus tournament in Wijk aan Zee in the Netherlands, from 9-25 January, perhaps the best organised event in the world and one that attracted most of the world elite.

Besides an array of smaller tournaments for the general public, there tend to be two closed GM groups of 14 players each, the strongest of these featuring the best players in the world. New this year was a C-group with a mix of talented players, Dutch title candidates and some grandmasters. This section was also strong, with an average rating of over 2450.

Getting into such a tournament is no easy matter. Magnus had been discovered by the editor of New In Chess, Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, during the European Club Cup in Crete some months before. There Magnus, sick and miserable, had managed a 2500+ performance against strong opposition. Dirk Jan was impressed and called Jeroen van den Berg, head of the Wijk aan Zee tournament, urging him to invite Magnus to the C-group.

But Henrik was not completely sure that the rest of the family would be content in this wind-swept coastal city, a half hour's drive from Amsterdam, in the middle of the winter. The organiser also smiled a bit at the concern that the tournament might be a bit weak – the group had not then finalised its quartet of grandmasters.

The family decided that only Magnus and his father should go to the Netherlands. The girls were not tempted by charming Dutch atmosphere or top chess players and stayed with their grandparents in Solør. It was a bit strange staying behind in Norway and not going to school, but they quickly adapted to a life of tending horses, skiing, evening cinema visits and other pursuits. Schoolwork they took care of on their own.

They had also been promised a trip to an island somewhere in the Indian Ocean. The plan was that Henrik would buy tickets to Mauritius or a similar destination from Holland, since it was much cheaper there. One of the arbiters convinced Henrik that they should instead head for Curaçao in the Caribbean. Henrik ordered tickets but the holiday had to be scrapped when it turned out to be too big a burden for his credit card. But Magnus would make sure the Carlsens would get to see exciting destinations. The snowball started to roll in Wijk aan Zee.

The conditions were optimal. The consideration and hospitality of the Dutch organisers was evident as soon as they landed. There was no need to worry about transport or any other practical details, everything was taken care of. True, the accommodation was graded, with a grand, luxury hotel for the stars of the A-group, a slightly smaller hotel for the B-group and an even smaller one for the C-players. The rooms were without bath and toilet, but it was a cosy and intimate hotel and Magnus and his father enjoyed themselves. The weather was cold, so they had a refrigerator by hanging a plastic bag out the window.

The playing schedule was ideal for Magnus, with three rest days and start of play at 1.30 p.m. They had learned how important it was to be rested and Magnus got to sleep as long as he wished. Normally he awoke around 11-12, sometimes he slept even longer. After some Weetabix and orange juice in the room they usually played football for 30-60 minutes in a nearby field, just the two of them. Magnus got a chance to run and romp.

Next it was time to prepare. Magnus began the evening before by checking what his opponent played and then worked out the specifics of an opening or variation just before the game. Magnus is fully equipped with a laptop and all the software he needs but time often ran short and for a few games Magnus turned up a bit late.

Time to prepare was especially lacking in the one game Magnus lost. Magnus had let a software program analyse the critical position but had to go before the computer had finished its calculations. Just afterwards the same position arose on the board in his game. Magnus sank into thought for half an hour but made the wrong decision and got into trouble.

After the games they usually ate at an Italian restaurant nearby. Sometimes the stars from the top group were there as well, which was a big treat, especially

since it was not so easy to watch them in action during the rounds.

The playing area was a large sports hall with room for all the participants in the festival. The A and B groups were given plenty of room, roped off in a corner, while the C-group got its own territory a few metres away. By stretching up on the tips of his toes Magnus could just make out one of the boards from the top group. He was a bit saddened that he was not allowed to go behind the enclosure and watch the biggest guns play. That was something he had been looking forward to. The organisers were worried that if they gave him permission others would come and ask for the same. But after a quick poll of the top players, Magnus was allowed to wander where he wanted in the final round.

By then it was too late. Magnus was completely absorbed with other things. Besides, the top group was not what the public wanted to see any more, it was Magnus and his games that people were flocking around. Peter Leko, ranked number four in the world, responded with a smile when asked if it was OK if Magnus could go behind the barrier to watch him play: 'Yes, but we aren't able to see his games!'

There were a number of monitors set up around the vast hall, transmitting all the games from the A-group. In the C-group only one game was shown. Eventually Magnus completely took over the show. It was not enough just to show his games on the C-screen, when one of the games from the top group was finished Magnus' game was transferred to the vacant screen there.

Nevertheless, crowds built up where Magnus was sitting and where his games were broadcast. There could be as many as 100 people standing on tiptoe to get a glimpse of the little boy and the miracle unfolding. The first outbreak of Magnus-fever was undoubtedly recorded in Wijk aan Zee in the Netherlands.

He started carefully, with a draw against a fourteen year old Ukrainian girl, Kateryna Lahno (2493), but, just like Magnus, this was not your average teenager. She was already top-rated in the world for her age, regardless of gender, and already the number six ranked woman in the world.

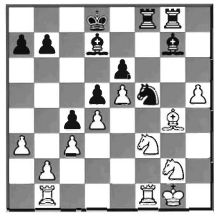
Magnus pushed Lahno in a long endgame but didn't manage to put the ball in the net. As Henrik wrote in Norsk Sjakkblad: 'When he eventually found something that resembled a winning continuation he ran short of time and had to simplify into a drawn ending with a piece and two pawns for each player. Many spectators (me included) were nervous when he nonchalantly offered a draw with 45 seconds left on his clock while his time was running. Lahno understandably refused but Magnus elegantly sacrificed a piece and assured the draw ten moves later and with 22 seconds left – whew!'

In the next round he produced a sleek win against Peng Zhaoqin (2419), originally from China, but who after marrying a Dutch chess player settled in Europe.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Peng Zhaoqin**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 I believe that 3.♘c3 gives the best chances of an advantage, but

it demands some experience to understand the difficult positions in the Winawer variation (3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3 6.bxc3). **3...c5 4.c3 ♕b6 5.♘f3 ♗d7 6.a3 c4** As Alexander Rustemov showed against Magnus in the last round of the Aeroflot Open Black has good chances for equality with 6...♗b5. The game ended in a draw after 7.b4 cxd4 8.♗xb5+ ♕xb5 9.cxd4 ♘d7 10.♘c3 ♕c6 11.♘a4 ♘e7 12.♗e3 ♘b6 13.♘xb6 ♕xb6 14.0-0 ♘f5 15.♖c1 ♕d8 16.♕a4+ ♕d7 17.♕a5 ♗e7 18.♖c7 b6 19.♖xd7 bxa5 20.♖b7 axb4 21.axb4 0-0 22.g4 ♘xe3 ½-½ **7.g3 ♘c6 8.h4** The difficult question in this variation is how to answer a black break with the f-pawn. Presumably White should take on f6 and pressure the e6-pawn, but in that case 8.♗h3 is a more logical move. However, the way Black plays it is nice to secure a bit of space on the kingside. **8...h6 9.♗h3 ♘ge7 10.♘bd2 ♘a5 11.0-0 ♕c7?** What is the point of this I wonder? **12.h5 0-0-0 13.♘h4** White prepares to charge with his f-pawn. **13...g5 14.♘g2! ♗g7 15.f4 f5 16.g4!** White's chances lie on the kingside. That his king is also on this side is not so dangerous. With such a colossus of a pawn centre it will take a lot before Black can dream of attacking on this flank. 16.exf6 would only open lines and diagonals for Black. **16...♖hg8 17.♘f3 ♘b3 18.♖b1 ♘xc1** Before White runs off with the bishop, leaving the knight pointlessly placed. **19.♕xc1 ♖df8** Both 19...gxf4 20.gxf5 ♘xf5 21.♗xf5 exf5 22.♔f2 and 19...fxg4 20.♗xg4 gxf4 21.♕xf4 give White a positional advantage. **20.fxg5 hxg5 21.♕xg5!** Bold! **21...♕d8** The knight was hanging. **22.♕h4 fxg4 23.♗xg4 ♘f5 24.♕xd8+ ♔xd8**



25.♘fh4! By returning the pawn Magnus completely takes over the initiative. **25...♘xh4 26.♘xh4 ♖xf1+ 27.♖xf1 ♗xe5 28.♘g6 ♗g7 29.♖f7!** All of White's pieces are working at maximum power. **29...♗h6 30.♔h2 ♗c1 31.♘e5 ♗c8 32.♖f2** A temporary withdrawal in preparation for the final assault. **32...♔e7** After 32...♔e8 planning 33...♖f8 Magnus must remember to insert 33.♘g6, when Black has no active options. **33.♔h3 ♔e8 34.♘g6 ♗d7?** This makes things easier for White. The best defence was to wait passively, going back and forth with the dark squared bishop, when it is not obvious how White breaks through. **35.♖c2 ♗g5 36.♖e2!** Now the e-pawn falls as 36...♔f7 costs material after 37.♘e5+ ♔e7 38.♘xd7 and the bishop takes on e6. **36...♗c1 37.♗xe6 ♗xe6+ 38.♖xe6+ ♔d7 39.♖e2!** All counterplay is prevented. **39...♖e8 40.♘e5+ ♔c7 41.♖c2 ♗e3 42.♖g2 ♖e6** 42...♗c1 is tougher, but would not have changed the result. **43.♖g7+ ♔c8 44.♖g6** Black resigned. The h-pawn decides.

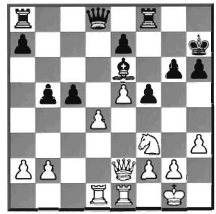
The first rest day came as early as after the second round. Magnus protested as much as he could – he wanted to sit inside and watch Eurosport – but he was not going to miss a hike along the magnificent seashore

where mighty North Sea waves and strong wind gave good contact with the elements' as Henrik put it, in Norsk Sjakkblad. Magnus also found it exciting to see the North Sea Channel four kilometres further south, with five locks and sluices that bring large ships down to canal level towards Amsterdam.

The active rest' was a shot in the arm for Magnus. In the next rounds things could only be described as fantastic. The win in the third round against Milos Pavlovic (2548) from Serbia and Montenegro was important. Magnus looked to be in danger, but the grandmaster could not find a way to punish him and our hero rode off the storm.

□ **Milos Pavlovic**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.0-0 ♗g7 5.♖e1 ♘f6 6.♘c3 0-0 7.e5 ♘g4 7...♘e8 is more common, the knight gets active via c7 and often e6 and d4. Magnus' move is more exciting. **8.♗xc6 dxc6 9.h3 ♘h6 10.♘e4 b6 11.d3 f6** After 11...♘f5 White can keep the knight out with 12.c3 and then chase it back with g2-g4. **12.♗xh6** A debatable decision. **12...♗xh6 13.♕e2 f5** 13...♕c7 was an alternative. **14.♘eg5 ♗xg5** Both players have had to make some important decisions in the last few moves. I think that in retrospect 14...♗g7 looks more natural. Black does not seem to come out worse in the complications after 15.h4 h6 16.♘h3 f4 17.e6 (or 17.♕e4 ♗xh3 18.gxh3 ♕d5!) 17...♖f6 18.♕e4 ♖xe6 19.♕xf4 ♕d6! **15.♘xg5 h6 16.♘f3 ♗e6 17.♖ad1 ♔h7 18.c4 b5!** Another difficult assessment. Black has to create targets for the bishop. The c5-pawn becomes weak, but it remains defensible. **19.cxb5** Very committal, Black's bishop now becomes strong. 19.b3 was the positional move. **19...cxb5 20.d4**



20...c4! Very cool play. **21.d5** Else Black plants his bishop on this square. **21...♗xd5!** This looks dangerous but Magnus has calculated accurately. **22.e6 ♕d6 23.♕d2 ♖ad8** The worst is already over. White has no more ammunition. **24.♕a5 ♕b6 25.♕b4 ♖fe8!** White has run out of things to do while Black can calmly pocket the e-pawn as well. **26.♘e5 a5 27.♕a3 b4 28.♕g3 ♕xe6!** White has no good knight discovery. **29.♘xc4** White is lost either way. **29...♗xc4! 30.♖xe6 ♖xd1+ 31.♔h2 ♗xe6 32.♕c7 ♖d5 33.♕c6 ♗f7!** 0-1 Black has everything covered and will easily realise his material advantage.

Magnus considers his win in the next round over Russian GM Valery Popov (2580) one of his best ever. He chose an ultra-sharp variation that he played often in blitz at the ICC. His father was sceptical that this would be good enough against a strong GM but wisely held his tongue. There was no reason for concern.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Valery Popov**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♕b6 8.♕d2 I had no idea Magnus knew anything about these razor-sharp variations that were popular 20-30 years ago. **8...♕xb2 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.f5 ♘c6 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.♘xc6 bxc6 13.e5**

13...♘d5 In our analysis after the tournament I thought I would show off a bit by demonstrating the variation 13...dxe5 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘e4 ♗e7 16.♗e2 h5 17.♖b3 ♕a4 18.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 19.c4 ♗h4+ 20.g3 ♗e7 21.0-0, which I remember being played a bit when I was young, but Magnus quickly took over the show by explaining that 17.♖f1 (instead of 17.♖b3) is better. With the king on e1 White avoids a check on d4 in some important variations. After 17...f5 18.♖f3 ♕a4 (or 18...♕xa2 19.♖fb3! fxe4 20.♕c3! and White threatens both 21.♖a1 and 21.♕xc6) 19.♘d6+ ♔f8 20.♘c4 Black is in grave danger. Magnus' source was an article in a New In Chess Yearbook. **14.♘xd5 cxd5 15.♗d3** 15.♗e2 has been played but Magnus did not know this. He thought it was more natural to put the bishop on d3. **15...dxe5 16.0-0 ♗e7 17.♔h1** With the idea 18.♕f2 ♗xg5 19.♕f7+ ♔f8 20.♕xg7. **17...e4 18.♗e2 ♖f8 19.c4 dxc4** As Magnus showed in analysis, Black also has problems after 19...♖xf1+ 20.♖xf1 ♗b7 21.♗g4!. A nice variation is 21...♕d3 22.♕f2 ♗xg5 23.♕f7+ ♔d8 24.♖d1! and Black's position crumbles. **20.♖xf8+ ♔xf8** Or 20...♗xf8 21.♗h5+ g6 22.♕d8+ ♔f7 23.♖f1+ ♔g8 24.♕e8 ♖a7 25.♕xc8 is the end. **21.♕f4+ ♔e8 22.♖f1**

Black's king is ambushed and his defence troops have not even woken up. **22...♖a7** After 22...♗xg5 23.♕f7+ ♔d8 24.♖d1 Black must give up his queen. **23.♕f7+ ♔d7** 23...♔d8 24.♕f8+ ♔d7 25.♖d1+ is even worse. **24.♖d1+ ♔c6 25.♕e8+ ♔b6** The ending after 25...♗d7 26.♕xe7 is of course easily winning for White. **26.♕xc8** Massacre! After 26...♗xg5 27.♕xe6+ Black will be quickly mated. Black resigned.

Against the lower rated players in the group Magnus won with simple means. In this example against Tea Bosboom-Lanchava (2323), the third woman in the field, he eventually lands an elegant combination.

□ **Tea Bosboom-Lanchava**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

28...♖xd1+! This combination secures Magnus a winning endgame. 28...♕xg2?? is not as clever after 29.♕xg2 ♖xd1 30.♔e2!. **29.♔xd1 ♘xe3+!** Better than 29...♕xg2 30.♕xg4. **30.♕xe3 ♕xg2 31.♕e5 ♕h1+ 32.♔c2 ♕xh2+ 33.♔b3** White didn't need to give away all the pawns with check but also after 33.♔b1 ♕g1+ 34.♔a2 ♕d4 Black wins easily. **33...♕xg3+ 34.♔a2 ♕d3 35.♕c7+ ♕d7 36.♕e5 f6 37.♕h5 ♕d3 38.b3 ♕c2+ 39.♔a1 ♕xb3 40.♕xh7 ♕xa3+ 41.♔b1 ♕b3+ 42.♔a1 ♕d1+ 43.♔b2 ♔f7 44.♔a3 ♕f3+ 45.♔a4 a6 46.f5 ♕xf5** The finish has been a lavish banquet. Five extra pawns should satisfy. **47.♕h2 e5 48.♕g2 e4 49.♕h2 ♕e5 50.♕h1 e3 51.♕b7+ ♔f8** White resigned.

Magnus was also near victory in the sixth round against IM Ruud Janssen (2489) from the Netherlands but eventually had to settle for a draw. With five points after the first six rounds his rating performance was 2748, a number corresponding to the absolute world elite. He needed only one point from the next three rounds to clinch his first GM-norm.

A grandmaster norm requires a performance of at least 2600 in a tournament of at least nine rounds. There are also requirements about the quality of the opposition but all of this was in order here. Even if the tournament was 13 rounds long, Magnus could earn a norm of any length between 9 and 13. With this start only something very much like total collapse could prevent him from scoring a norm of some duration here.

The first mark was 6/9. With a win against Georgian GM Merab Gagunashvili (2583) in the seventh round this norm would already be in the box. The aggressive Georgian, who a year and a half before had finished second in the European championship and has defeated world stars like Alexander Morozevich and Alexander Grischuk, came out swinging and Magnus appeared to be on the ropes for some time. But young Carlsen, full of self-confidence, did not seem affected by the situation at all and he defended himself with icy calm.

When Gagunashvili offered a draw after his 34th move it was already too late. Magnus wanted to win! With his adversary in severe time trouble he played the crafty 35...♖e8 which he thought would come as a surprise, even though he thought that 35...♖d8 was objectively better. A few moves later the game and his first GM-norm were safely in hand.

□ **Merab Gagunashvili**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 One of the most fashionable variations nowadays, and Magnus is up-to-date with the

latest theoretical assessments. **5.a4 e6 6.♗g5 ♘bd7 7.a5!?** A sharp, committal move. **7...dxc4 8.e4 h6 9.♗h4 ♗b4 10.♕a4** There is no way back. **10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 g5 12.♗g3 ♘xe4 13.♕xc4 ♘xg3 14.hxg3 c5** As usual, Magnus seeks active play. **15.♗e2 cxd4 16.♖d1!?** But this had escaped him completely. **16...dxc3** He did not like the passive state of his forces after 16...♕xa5 17.♕xd4 e5 18.♕d2, but it is not clear that this is so dangerous. **17.♕xc3 ♕f6 18.♕b4 ♕e7 19.♖d6**

19...♘f6!? Magnus is desperate to get his pieces into play and is happy to jettison his extra baggage. Another way to proceed was 19...♖b8 followed by a break with the b-pawn and developing the bishop to b7. After 20.0-0 the h6-pawn would no longer be hanging and Black could castle safely. **20.♕d4 e5** This was the point. **21.♘xe5 ♗e6 22.f4**

22...♖d8? Magnus just shook his head after neglecting to take on f4 first. Now a new attacking wave washes over him. **23.♕a4+ ♔f8 24.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 25.fxg5 ♘d5 26.gxh6 ♕g5 27.♕a3+ ♔e8** 27...♔g8 28.♖h5 ♕f6 29.♕c1! is critical for Black. **28.♖h5 ♕f6 29.♗d1 ♘e7 30.♕f3** Also 30.♕a4+ ♔f8 31.♕f4 ♕xf4 32.gxf4 should win for White. **30...♘f5**

31.♗a4+?! The grandmaster begins to lose his grip. After 31.♘g4! ♕e7 32.♕c3 Black's condition would be critical. **31...♔f8 32.♕a3+** White is just chasing the king to safety. **32...♔g8 33.♘g4 ♕d4 34.♗d1** With a draw offer. **34...♔h7!** Not today! **35.♗e2**

35...♖e8 A wily move in his opponent's time pressure, but the absolute best was 35...♖d8!. **36.♕d3?** 36.♕f3! was the only chance. **36...♕g1+ 37.♔d2 ♖c8**

38.♗f1 ♕c5 The white king is doomed. **39.♘e3 ♕c1+ 40.♔e2 ♖c3! 41.♕xc3 ♕xc3 42.♘xf5 ♗c4+!** There was a trap to avoid: 42...♗xf5? 43.♖xf5 ♕c2 44.♔e3 ♕xf5? 45.♗d3!. **43.♔f2 ♕d2+ 44.♔g1 ♗xf1!** After 45.♔xf1 ♕d1+ the rook falls. White resigned.

At the Italian restaurant that night they celebrated with pizza and Magnus was promised two scoops of ice cream for dessert. Usually the Carlsens are restrictive about things like this. In chess, where small details can make a world of difference, it is certainly wise to be nutrition-conscious and avoid empty calories, but small indulgences must be possible, especially on such a special occasion. But there would be even more than planned – their friendly waitress had read about Magnus in the local newspaper and came instead with a huge ice-cream goblet topped with whipped cream and other delights.

Afterwards Magnus got to relax doing what he liked best, namely, playing more chess at the ICC. His preparations for IM Jan Werle (2407) from the Netherlands were not necessary now.

Magnus continued to cruise on, and after only 12 moves in his game against Werle he got the chance to make a positional knight sacrifice.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Jan Werle**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 d6 6...♗b4 or 6...♕c7 are more aggressive moves. **7.g3!** Black will struggle to get into a normal 'Hedgehog' position after this move. **7...♕c7 8.♗e3 b6 9.♗g2 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♘bd7** 10...♕xc4 11.♖c1 is obviously too dangerous. **11.♖c1 ♗e7** 11...♖c8 avoids the coming scandal, but in any case White has a known variation of the Hedgehog where White has built up an aggressive position with a move to spare. Normally, when this position is reached from the English Opening, White must insert ♖e1 in order to achieve e2-e4 and be able to recapture d4 with a knight.

12.♘d5! A standard sacrificial idea that carries plenty of weight in this position. **12...exd5 13.cxd5 ♕b8** 13...♘c5 14.b4 is clearly better for White. **14.♘c6 ♗xc6 15.dxc6 ♖a7** After 15...♘c5 16.c7! and 17.e5! White can calmly recoup his material investment. **16.cxd7+ ♘xd7 17.♗h3 0-0 18.♗xd7!** Finely judged. **18...♖xd7 19.♕d5 b5 20.♖c6 ♕a8 21.♖fc1** White dominates the board. **21...♖fd8 22.♗b6 ♖e8 23.♕f5 ♖b7 24.♗d4 ♗f8 25.♖c8 ♖b8** Here there were whispers in the corridors that Magnus had a forced mate with 26.♖1c7 f6 27.♖xg7+! Magnus didn't see this but his position is so good that it does not make a difference in the long run. **26.♖8c7 ♖e7 27.♖xe7 ♗xe7 28.♖c7 ♖e8 29.♕d7 ♕d8 30.♕c6** White's domination is even more complete. **30...♗f8 31.♖a7 ♕c8 32.♕d5 ♕e6 33.♕xe6**

♖xe6 34.f3 d5 35.♖a8! ♖c6 36.exd5 ♖c7 37.♗c3! Black resigned.

Magnus' only loss in the tournament came in the ninth round against GM Dusko Pavasovic (2615) from Slovenia. He got a difficult position but defended well and eventually reached a rook ending that he would normally hold easily. He then offered a draw, something he usually doesn't do if he doesn't feel certain his opponent will accept. The grandmaster wanted to play on a bit and, in a momentary lapse of concentration a few moves later, Magnus blundered badly and was suddenly lost instead.

Even if his result was still formidable – 7/9 and a rating performance over 2700, Magnus took the defeat to heart. He hates to lose. It was also a bit disturbing that a television team had set up with their camera directly in view of Magnus as they filmed all his movements and expressions during the game. Normally photography is only allowed at the beginning of a game, but perhaps carried away by all the fuss, the organisers allowed the TV-team total freedom. Magnus had been surprised but was not about to complain.

On the rest day that followed Magnus was his usual happy self. He had agreed to give a simultaneous exhibition against a top executive from Corus, the tournament's main sponsor, and 14 others at one of the many receptions. All of the star players were there as well but the organisers wanted Magnus for this exhibition. The opposition was not so bad, with several players over 2000 in playing strength, but Magnus impressed here as well with 14½/15.

The last four rounds were about actually winning the event. The Dutch IMs Sipke Ernst (2474) and Jan Smeets (2505) were both having fantastic tournaments and they had also made GM-norms after nine rounds. Magnus would meet them in the last two rounds. First there were a pair of Dutchmen rated around 2200 to take care of, simply, in rounds ten and eleven. This set the stage for the showdown against Ernst in the penultimate round.

Ernst had managed to keep up with Magnus' furious pace and also had 9/11. A careful draw to ensure some prize money is quite standard in such situations but Magnus never considered it. The following game has been printed around the world. He has played many fine games but this was the breakthrough creation that really made him famous.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Sipke Ernst**
Wijk aan Zee 2004

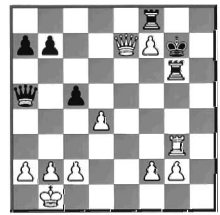
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.h5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 ♗xd3 10.♕xd3 e6 11.♗f4 ♘gf6 The old variations with 11...♕a5+ 12.♗d2 ♕c7 have fallen from favour at the top level. **12.0-0-0 ♗e7 13.♘e4 ♕a5** The endgame after 13...♘xe4 14.♕xe4 ♘f6 15.♕d3 ♕d5 16.c4 ♕e4 17.♕xe4 ♘xe4 is a bit better for White. **14.♔b1 0-0** Magnus showed the variation 14...♘xh5 15.♗d2 ♕f5 16.♘d6+ ♗xd6 17.♕xf5 exf5 18.♖xh5 and White wins the pawn back but, in my opinion, without any particular advantage. **15.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16.♘e5 ♖ad8 17.♕e2** 17.♕g3 has been played by some very strong players. **17...c5** In Bareev-Anand, Moscow 2002, 17...♕b6

18.c3 c5 19.♗e3 ♘d5 gave Black a comfortable game.

18.♘g6! The famous move that made people wonder if Magnus had prepared this in advance. **18...fxg6?** After the game it is easy to give this a question mark. Both players thought 18...♖fe8 19.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 20.dxc5 was excellent for White, but after 20...♖ed7 it is not easy to demonstrate an advantage. **19.♕xe6+ ♔h8 20.hxg6!** Black escapes after 20.♕xe7 ♘d5 21.♗d2 ♘xe7 22.♗xa5 ♖xd4. **20...♘g8** There are many sacrificial possibilities in the air. 20...♖fe8 is clearly bad after 21.♗xh6 gxh6 22.♕f7 and mate follows. 20...♖de8 21.♖xh6+! gxh6 22.♗xh6 is more sophisticated, but Black loses here too. White threatens both 23.♖h1 and a fork with the g-pawn.

21.♗xh6! gxh6 21...♘xh6 loses at once: 22.♖xh6+! gxh6 23.♕xe7 **22.♖xh6+!** Magnus's play is nothing less than brilliant. **22...♘xh6 23.♕xe7 ♘f7**

24.gxf7! Almagro Llanas-Gustafsson, Madrid 2003, ended in a draw after repetition of moves after 24.♕f6+ ♔g8 25.♖h1 ♘h6! 26.♕e7 ♘f7. Magnus did not know about this game but saw the variation and quickly decided that he had a decisive attack. **24...♔g7 25.♖d3** Even more precise was 25.♕e5+ ♔xf7 26.♖d3 since Black could now prolong the game by playing 25...♕b6 26.♖g3+ ♕g6. **25...♖d6 26.♖g3+ ♖g6** There are many lines and diagonals to watch, but it is clear that Black is mated after 26...♔h7 27.♕e4+.



27.♕e5+! Magnus easily finds the forced win. **27...♔xf7** Or 27...♔h7 28.♕h5+ ♖h6 29.♕f5+ ♔h8 30.♕e5+ mating. **28.♕f5+ ♖f6 29.♕d7** Mate.

The final position is just as lovely as the rest of the game.

The knight sacrifice on move 18 has since been widely discussed in chess circles. Was this really something Magnus found at the board or was it formidable home preparation? In a later interview in 'Chess Today' readers got the opportunity to ask Magnus' questions. The Czech-American GM Lubosh Kavalek, who described Magnus as the 'Mozart of Chess', asked precisely this question. Magnus replied that he had seen the idea before but that he didn't know more than that. Many did not believe it, and eventually someone discovered that Magnus had played the move in a similar position on ICC some weeks before. Magnus did not remember this, and besides, it takes much more than that to qualify as home preparation.

In the closing rounds of the tournament Magnus had begun to relax in the evening by playing at the ICC and strangely enough Magnus got the chance to repeat exactly this sacrifice a few hours after his game with Sipke Ernst. Roar Elseth, a top Norwegian player who follows Magnus' games was impressed and asked if he had ever played the sacrifice before, giving Magnus the chance to reply: 'Yes, in my game against Sipke Ernst today!'

Many months later I also got a chance to play exactly this sacrifice in an ICC game and could then notice a spectator comment: 'Gruk (my handle) is Magnus Carlsen's trainer.'

With a solid draw in the final around against Smeets Magnus won the event with a majestic score of 10½/13; a point above the GM-norm and a rating performance of 2702. In rating terms this is on a level of the world top 25 and this fooled some journalists into writing that Magnus was already so highly ranked – things don't go that fast.

The promised holiday to Curaçao had been undone by technical problems with money transfer. Instead the boys could return home with a concrete offer to visit Moscow. Alexander Bakh, the tournament organiser of Moscow's Aeroflot Open, the strongest open tournament in the world with nearly 150 GMs, was present in Wijk aan Zee and was as captivated by Magnus as everyone else. Usually the Moscow organisers do not offer special conditions since the prizes are high and the prices for flights and hotel are reasonable, but for Magnus they would make an exception. Magnus would be an ideal and symbol of hope for everyone. If Magnus would appear on the TV broadcast of the opening ceremony, then he and a companion would have all expenses paid, while the other family members could attend for only NOK 2,600 (about 300 Euro) each.

In terms of climate this was a far cry from the island in the Indian Ocean they had dreamed of. Moscow in February is cold, but the hotel was grand. With its

2,800 rooms the Hotel Rossia is the largest in Europe. The location was central, a stone's throw from the newly renovated Kremlin. The famous government building looked nearly like Disneyland, shining in red and gold.

Moscow is, of course, a city crammed with cultural attractions, something Magnus hates most of all. As it turned out he only had to visit the Pushkin Museum the day after the event and get an education in famous painters. The girls also took in the Tretyakov Museum with its sculptures and art treasures and the Armoury Chamber, with its finery from former tsars and tsarinas. For Magnus' mother the high point of the year, let alone the trip, was the chance to see Swan Lake at the Bolshoi ballet.

Just two weeks before the tournament began there was a gruesome terrorist attack on one of Moscow's beautiful underground stations and, a week after that, the roof of a large water park had collapsed, both tragedies well covered by the world media. This naturally marked the city. There were police everywhere, so presumably Moscow was safer than ever. The playing hall made thorough security checks of all trying to enter. Despite many sceptical comments from home, the Carlsens were not afraid, though they were also not tempted to ride on the underground.

Pizza and fast food from the hypermodern shopping centre nearby made up most of the menu – the children were reluctant to eat in Russian restaurants. It wasn't easy to exercise, either. There were no football fields or yards to run around in. Instead Magnus had to hike at least twice around the enormous hotel, at ten minutes a circuit.

Preparing for the first round did not go smoothly. The family arrived at Moscow airport around 4:30 p.m. before the event started and got to the hotel at around 8 p.m. Because of a mistake on the hotel's lists they did not get their keys until a little after midnight. There were queues in reception and for those unused to using their elbows to make progress, it was easy to fall behind.

While the others waited in line Magnus was escorted in to the opening ceremony which was taking place on this evening. Magnus was, after all, a guest of honour, along with a number of celebrities and three former world champions. Magnus was clearly not amused by all the fuss. Boris Spassky, world champion from 1969-72, later told Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam that this reminded him of the first time he had been introduced to Mikhail Botvinnik, the legendary world champion who held the title three times in the time period 1948-1963. He recognised himself in the young boy's situation, something he told Magnus as they stood next to each other, both feeling a bit bored. But 'the Swedish talent', as Spassky called Magnus, had just looked at him strangely, 'probably because he didn't have the slightest idea who I was.'

But Magnus knew very well. He had just received the first volume of Kasparov's gigantic opus 'My Great Predecessors' as part payment for some games he had annotated for New In Chess. Dirk Jan noted with an amused expression that Magnus had not seemed to find it particularly interesting to speak to him after one of his games, but when he found out that he had brought the Kasparov book he immediately lit up and exclaimed 'Nice!' He was

absorbed in the book from the first moment. While the first volume only covers the first four world champions and not Spassky, Magnus knows his chess history. But talking to the old masters is not as exciting – he is most interested in their games.

Later in the event Magnus was invited to a chat with Vasily Smyslov, world champion from 1956-57. After the fifth round the editor of the French chess magazine Europe Echecs had managed to set up this meeting between players from different generations, but Magnus had just lost to Berkes and was not in the mood. But after a half an hour he had calmed down and unwillingly turned up. Smyslov expressed great admiration for Magnus. He was impressed by his playing style and predicted a great future for Magnus as a chess player. Smyslov also told a great deal about himself, how in his youth he had to make a choice between music and chess. His real dream had been to become a singer and study at the music conservatory but the academy had recommended he try chess.

I have experienced Smyslov's singing voice in our own home in Oslo. Smyslov visited Norway in connection with a fund-raiser for earthquake victims in Armenia in 1988. My parents held a reception and suddenly Smyslov sat down at the piano and began to play and sing. I don't know much about singing, but he had a powerful and resounding voice.

It remains to be seen if the CD of Smyslov's songs that Magnus received will be minutely examined but the two autographed volumes of Smyslov's games and studies were gratefully received. Magnus immediately had some comments on the games and the pair were finally on the same wavelength.

The tournament itself was an exciting event for Magnus and all of his new fans. Magnus had said in an interview on the Bergen's chess club web site that his goal was to be a GM in 2004. After the success in Wijk aan Zee it became clear that his ambitions were even higher. But the dream of a new GM result in Moscow took a hard blow in the very first round.

Magnus won a pawn early and got a clearly better position against GM Sarunas Sulskis (2582) from Lithuania, but chess is a game of small margins. At this level it does not take much to turn the tables.

□ **Sarunas Sulskis**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Moscow 2004

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 0-0 5.d4 c6!? An interesting idea that draws White into unknown territory. **6.♗e2** 6.e5 ♘e8 doesn't give anything special. Black gets to break with his d-pawn. The logical move is perhaps 6.♗d3, whereupon Black must enter a normal type of position with 6...d6 followed by the advance of his e-pawn. **6...d5 7.e5 ♘e4 8.0-0** 8.♘xe4 dxe4 9.♘g5 c5! is good for Black. **8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.♗xc4 c5! 11.h3** Black can develop optimally with 11.d5 ♗g4 if White does not safeguard his centre. **11...♘c6 12.♗e3 cxd4 13.cxd4 ♘a5 14.♗d3 ♗e6** Black has achieved a favourable variation of the Grünfeld Defence where Black has full control over both d5 and c4. **15.♖e1 ♖c8 16.♕d2 ♗d5 17.♘h2 ♘c4 18.♗xc4 ♖xc4**

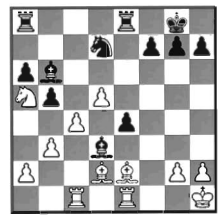
19.♗h6? This is a case of from bad to worse. **19...♗c6 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♘g4 ♖xd4 22.♕g5** Magnus is a healthy pawn ahead and should be able to win in a variety of ways. The simplest perhaps is to chase the knight with 22...h5. Magnus is more attracted by a direct attack, but this only gives his opponent counterchances. **22...♕d5?! 23.f3 ♖d2 24.♘e3 ♕d4?! 25.♔h1** Suddenly White is threatening something. **25...♗d7 26.♖ad1!** Things are no longer so clear. **26...♖xd1 27.♖xd1 ♕a4 28.♕xe7 ♗e6 29.♕f6+ ♔g8 30.h4 h5 31.g4! hxg4 32.h5 ♕c6 33.♖f1**

33...♗d7?? Only here does Magnus throw away a draw. Magnus himself gives 33...♗c8 as satisfactory and 33...♗xa2 is also possible. **34.♘d5!** Suddenly White is winning since 34...♕xd5 35.h6 leads to mate and 34...♕xf6+ 35.♘xf6+ shows why the bishop is misplaced on d7. **34...♔h7 35.hxg6+ fxg6 36.♕e7+** Black resigned.

Maybe that is what it took for Magnus to relax. Now he was back in a mode where it was most interesting to learn, not necessarily hunt a GM-norm. His approach now was to play hard for a win despite colour or opponent. This resulted in some fine games. As quickly as in round two, against GM Leonid Yurtaev (2527) from Kyrgyzstan, he started to shine.

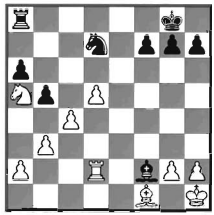
□ **Leonid Yurtaev**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Moscow 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4 There are some finesses in this position that indicate that 9.♔h1! is a good move. After, for example, 9...b5 10.a4 b4 11.♘d5 ♗b7 12.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 White has the possibility 13.f3!. 9...b6 is likely most accurate. **9...b5 10.♗f3 ♗b7 11.fxe5** This had better deliver concrete advantages, otherwise Black will simply be given the better structure. **11...dxe5 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘a5 ♗c8 14.♘d5 ♘xd5 15.exd5** White presumably had hopes for this position, but as Magnus demonstrates, Black is better. **15...♗c5+ 16.♔h1 ♗b6 17.♗d2 ♗f5 18.c4 ♗d3 19.♖fe1 ♘d7** Black has developed his forces smoothly, and to fine posts. **20.♖ac1 ♖e8** Black's passed pawn is far more dangerous than its rival on d5. **21.b3 e4 22.♗e2**



22...♗f2! Magnus enters a long tactical variation that secures him a decisive advantage. **23.♖f1 e3! 24.♗xd3 exd2**

25.♖cd1 ♖e1! 26.♖xd2 Even worse was 26.g3 ♘e5 27.♗c2 ♘g4 28.♔g2 ♗b6 and everything is hanging. **26...♖xf1+ 27.♗xf1**



27...♗e1! An elegant point. **28.♖d1 ♗xa5 29.cxb5 axb5 30.♗xb5 ♖d8** A bit of technique remains to be done. **31.d6 ♔f8 32.g3 ♘f6 33.d7 ♔e7 34.a3 ♘xd7 35.b4 ♘e5! 36.♖xd8 ♗xd8 37.a4 ♔d6** White resigned.

A win in the third round against GM and former world championship candidate Sergey Dolmatov (2591) from Russia put the wind back in Magnus' sails. In an odd variation of the Dutch Defence Magnus launched an interesting new idea. Dolmatov did not dare to accept the gambit offered, but Magnus insisted on giving things up and, with a beautiful exchange sacrifice as early as move 14, forced his experienced opponent to resign just five moves later.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Sergey Dolmatov**
Moscow 2004

1.♘f3 f5 2.d3 Dolmatov is an expert on the Dutch so it is wise to play something unusual. **2...d6 3.e4 e5 4.♘c3 ♘c6 5.exf5 ♗xf5 6.d4 ♘xd4 7.♘xd4 exd4 8.♕xd4 ♘f6 9.♗c4!** 9.♗d3 has been played before, but if Black wanted to take the c-pawn he could have done it the move before. **9...c6** Magnus mentioned something about the possibility of winning a tempo with ♔d2 if Black takes on c2, but 10.0-0 is the simplest. White gets a fearsome lead in development for the pawn. **10.♗g5 b5** Black doesn't have time to block with 10...d5 because of 11.0-0-0 ♗e7 12.♕e5! followed by 13.♖he1 with a crushing attack. **11.♗b3 ♗e7 12.0-0-0 ♕d7 13.♖he1 ♔d8** After 13...0-0-0 14.♕f4! it is not easy to prevent 15.♖xe7. 14...♖he8 can be met by 15.♗f7.

14.♖xe7! Dolmatov is swept off the board. **14...♕xe7** Or 14...♔xe7 15.♗xf6+ gxf6 16.♖e1+ and the pawn on f6 falls heavily to the queen. **15.♕f4 ♗d7 16.♘e4! d5 17.♘xf6 h6 18.♗h4 g5 19.♕d4!**

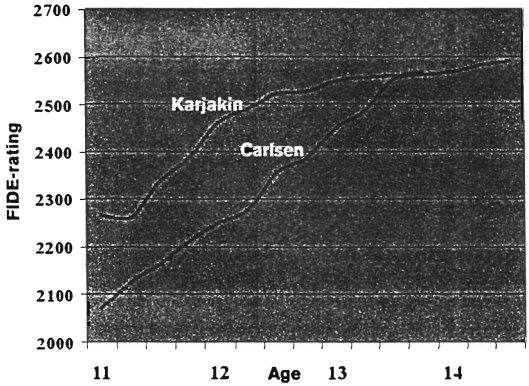
The final position says it all. Dolmatov didn't need to see 19...gxh4 20.♘xd5! and chose to resign.

'Magnus fever' broke out in Russia during this game. Spectators flocked around Magnus's table and admiration and superlatives were whispered in Russian. Alexander Nikitin, Garry Kasparov's former trainer, could not restrain himself and had to constantly nod with an impressed expression to Ten Geuzendam, who was standing there and capturing reactions. He had never seen a thirteen year old play so well, he told Dirk Jan in the canteen afterwards. The only comparison was with Kasparov at a similar age, the world's decidedly strongest player for the past 20 years. 'What about Karjakin?' the New In Chess editor wondered. 'No, he just studies a lot. This is real talent!'

Sergey Karjakin from Ukraine became a grandmaster at the age of twelve years and seven months, the youngest ever. He dropped out of school long ago to put all of his time into chess and will certainly establish himself among the world elite as well, but their methods are quite different. The graph below with international rating on one axis and age on the other is interesting.

At the moment Karjakin is just ahead of Magnus in rating, but one should not put too much weight behind such numbers. Both are huge talents and they must develop at their own pace. They will both become stars of world class.

Besides, the graph is not precise. There is an age difference of nearly eleven months between Magnus and Karjakin, but because of rounding off both ways the graph only indicates a six month age difference – in fact Magnus has already caught up with Karjakin. Such prodigies are not a new phenomenon but there is



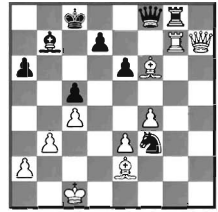
still limited experience in what happens as they mature. It will be exciting to follow their careers.

The following game against Russian IM Evgeny Shaposhnikov (2573) fanned the local enthusiasm for Magnus.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Evgeny Shaposhnikov**
Moscow 2004

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 c5 5.dxc5 ♗xc5 For the first round of the FIDE world championship a few months later we prepared for 5...♕c7, since opponent Lev Aronian had this in his repertoire. **6.♘f3 ♕b6** Black tries to keep the bishop on c1 at home but this move has its drawbacks. **7.e3 a6 8.b3 ♕c7 9.♗b2 b6 10.♗e2 ♗b7**

11.g4! Magnus exploits Black's slow development to take the initiative. **11...♘xg4 12.♖g1 ♘xh2 13.♘g5!** For two pawns Magnus has created an abundance of exciting tactical possibilities. **13...♘c6** 13...h6 is met by 14.♘xf7!. **14.0-0-0 ♘e5 15.♘ce4 0-0-0** This loses but it is not easy to suggest defensive moves for Black. **16.♘xc5 bxc5 17.f4** 17.♗xe5 ♕xe5 18.♘xf7 wins too, but Magnus does not want to surrender the initiative. **17...♘ef3 18.♘xf7 ♘xg1 19.♖xg1 ♘f3 20.♖xg7 ♖hg8 21.♘xd8 ♕xd8 22.♗f6!** The most precise. Magnus wants an escape square on b2 for his king. **22...♕f8 23.♕xh7**



23...♖h8 23...♖xg7 24.♗xg7 also loses. Black has troubles both with his king and his stranded knight. **24.♕g6 ♖h1+ 25.♔b2 ♖g1 26.♗g5 ♖xg5 27.fxg5 ♘e5 28.♕f6 ♕d6 29.♖g8+ ♔c7 30.♔c3!** A pretty finishing move that stops any counterplay. Black resigned.

In this tournament Magnus showed an extreme ability to recover from defeat. In the fifth round he lost to GM Ferenc Berkes (2602) from Hungary, but the next day he was back, beating Russian GM Yury Yakovich (2591) in simple fashion. After this Magnus had 4/6, with a rating performance of over 2700. The GM-norm would probably be five points. One point from the final three rounds would likely be enough.

The most natural thing would be to calm down with solid play and get a few draws but Magnus continued with his uncompromising play. That he was to meet Ukraine's seventeen-year-old talent, GM Andrey Volokitin (2594), known as a dangerous attacking player, didn't change his strategy.

□ **Andrey Volokitin**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Moscow 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗c4 b5 7.♗b3 e6 8.♕f3 The modern way to play this variation. The original idea was to make the bishop on b3 strong by playing f4 and f5, but Black has long found the recipe for meeting that plan. **8...♕c7 9.g4!?** This is very original. 9.0-0 is the normal move but Volokitin has bigger ambitions. **9...b4 10.g5 ♘fd7 11.♘a4 ♘c6 12.♗e3 ♘a5!** A surprising manoeuvre. I thought it was more natural to develop with 12...♗e7, but I bow to Magnus' powers of judgement. **13.0-0-0 ♗b7?!** After 13...♘xb3 Black probably has a large advantage. White's pieces do not coordinate at all and Black can press in the centre and on the queenside. **14.♗d2** Now Volokitin manages to create counterplay against Black's advanced queenside. **14...♘xb3+ 15.♕xb3**

15...♗e7 As Magnus pointed out, 15...e5! would give Black a clear advantage, but the fatal error comes later. **16.♗xb4 ♗xe4 17.♖he1 ♗d5** Magnus didn't like the thought of 17...♗g6 18.♘xe6 fxe6 19.♖xe6, but Black seems to survive after 19...♖c8 and 20...♗f7 after White has protected c2. **18.♕g3**

18...0-0? Magnus was clearly not at his best in this game. After 18...♖b8! 19.♗a3 ♘e5! White is still sweating. **19.♘f5!** Now White is rewarded for his daring play. **19...exf5 20.♖xe7 ♕c4** White is much better but this only makes things worse. **21.♕xd6 ♗e6 22.b3 ♕h4 23.♖xe6 fxe6 24.♕xe6+** Magnus could have fought on with 24...♔h8 25.♗xf8 ♕xg5+, but White is winning. Black resigned.

It was more challenging now to make a norm with one point out of the last two rounds, but Magnus took the point he needed in round eight with a positional pearl against GM Hannes Stefansson, Iceland's strongest active player.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Hannes Stefansson**
Moscow 2004

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 c5 5.g3 This is a variation popularised by Kasparov in the world title matches against Karpov around the time Magnus was born. After that, it went out of fashion. Normally it is older players that choose such variations against young upstarts who don't know their chess history, but here it is quite the opposite. **5...♘e4 6.♕d3 ♕a5 7.♕xe4 ♗xc3+ 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♘xd2**

0-0 10.♗g2 d6 11.dxc5! 11.♕e3 has been played but Magnus' move has more venom. **11...dxc5** After 11...♕xc5 White holds a small advantage. **12.♕e3 ♖d8 13.♖d1! ♕c7** White has a large lead in development after 13...♕xa2 14.0-0. **14.0-0 ♗d7 15.♕f4!?** A mature move that provokes a weakness. **15...e5** After 15...♕xf4 16.gxf4 ♗c6 17.♘b3 Black must take on a hopeless doubled pawn on the c-file with 17...♘a6. **16.♕e3 ♘a6** While Black is still struggling to get his pieces out White has a clear route for his knight, which is heading to the newly formed hole on d5. **17.♘e4 ♗c6 18.♘c3 ♖d4**

19.♘b5! A new possibility has arisen. **19...♗xb5 20.cxb5 ♘b4** Nor does 20...♕d7 21.♕b3! solve Black's problems. **21.♕b3!** The knight is lost. **a5 22.♖xd4!** The most accurate. **cxd4 23.a3 ♕c2 24.♕xc2 ♘xc2 25.♗xb7** Black resigned. After 25...♖b8 26.♗e4 d3 27.e3! Black's knight problem remains insoluble.

And so the second norm was also earned with a round to spare. Magnus had faced seven GMs and one IM, beaten five of them and lost three. He finished with a quick draw against another strong Russian GM, Alexander Rustemov (2585) and finished with 5½ out of 9 and a rating performance of 2660.

Once again Magnus had performed like one of the world elite. The global chess community had really noticed the Norwegian comet. Just before the Moscow tournament there was a deep interview with Magnus at the Chessbase web site and Chess Today presented reader questions and answers from Magnus in two consecutive issues.

In Norway things were still relatively calm. There were a few headlines here and there after the super result in Wijk aan Zee. The 'court reporter' Ole Valaker, who follows everything around Magnus and generally publishes first, got a top headline at Nettavisen with 'Chess bomb from Magnus (13)'. VG, Norway's largest newspaper, has also understood that Magnus made good reading and wrote about the 'chess genius'.

Television also began to show interest in the boy. After the success in Wijk aan Zee Magnus and I were invited to Breakfast TV on NRK, Norwegian Broadcasting. NRK had also been to NTG and spoken to Magnus, but a live appearance in a TV studio was completely new. I think he should do these things. First, because it is fun. While press journalists can ask and dig a lot and maybe only use a fraction, live television is a completely different experience. Here you capture the moment created, without editing or anything else that can warp events. And, it is educational. While his contemporaries are perhaps sitting with a fear of raising their hand and speaking up in the classroom, Magnus gets to feel how it is to be watched and listened to by many thousands of people.

Magnus eventually decided to accept and we met just after eight in the morning

at the NRK studio in Marienlyst in Oslo. I had insisted that they pay for a taxi since rush-time traffic into Oslo at that time was hopeless. On the day, when the taxi turned up a bit over seven o'clock, I was still unsure if we would make it in time. It had snowed all night and the road conditions were chaotic, to put it mildly.

But we just managed it and Magnus carried himself wonderfully. The experienced hosts, Anne Grosvold and Øystein Bache, steered away from 'idiotic questions' and got Magnus going. He even admitted later that he thought it was a bit fun.

The ways of the media are interesting. If you turn up in one place, suddenly a gang of others come and want you, too. TV 2 tried persistently to interview Magnus before he travelled to his next event in Iceland, but then he was no longer interested. The focus once again was on chess and opening preparation.

One group that had managed to slip through the eye of the needle and get Magnus to talk was a film team from the production company Main Island. They had started early, even before Wijk aan Zee they had asked to make a half hour documentary about Magnus. They got a scoop. Unable to foresee the press storm that would follow, the family agreed.

It was a bit disturbing at first to have a camera half a metre away recording your every move and remark when we sat at NTG and worked on chess. The film team tagged along here and there, to Iceland and also later to the world championship in Libya a few months later, nearly always with a camera ready to capture any possible golden moments that might turn up. After a while you nearly forget that you are being filmed, you can get used to it.

After the GM norms in Wijk aan Zee and Moscow there was a certain pressure going into the tournament in Reykjavik. With an equivalent result he would complete the requirements in Iceland – three 2600+ performances earn the title. Magnus had done this with room to spare in his two previous outings. Now the press corps was assembled and ready to chronicle the final norm live.

The big story would turn out to be Magnus being invited to a stellar blitz and quick play tournament right after the open event. There Magnus would play against none other than Garry Kasparov and the only slightly less able Anatoly Karpov, world champion from 1975-85. This was the stuff of headlines.

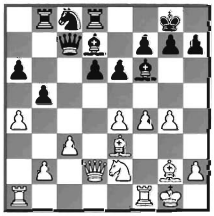
Magnus was also completely focused on the norm himself, which did nothing to lessen the pressure. The family tried as well they could to play it down and focus on learning and not result but the GM-norm was there in the back of Magnus' mind, smouldering. The tournament began according to plan, with a win with black in a long endgame against Halldor Halldorsson (2159) from Iceland.

The experience from Moscow and the Netherlands was that Magnus could nearly walk on water with the white pieces. His score was formidable and this can create a deceptive feeling. His 'sense of danger', an important chess perception, can easily be dulled by success and in Iceland Magnus was brought heavily back to earth. In three of his four white games he lost after audacious play. The first defeat came against the

53-year-old Dutch legend Jan Timman (2578) in the next round.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Jan Timman**
Reykjavik 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 e6 5.♘c3 a6 6.g3 ♘ge7 Planning to take on d4 and follow up with a new knight to c6, but after Magnus' next move it is difficult to find good squares for both knights. **7.♘b3! d6 8.♗g2 ♗d7 9.0-0 ♘c8** Black regroups but it looks a bit suspicious. **10.a4 ♗e7 11.♕e2 0-0 12.♗e3 ♘a5 13.♘xa5 ♕xa5** Black has finally managed to trade one knight but the problem with the other remains. **14.♕d2 ♕c7 15.♘e2 ♗f6 16.c3 ♖d8 17.f4 ♖b8 18.g4!** Magnus is ready to attack. **18...b5**



19.g5 Magnus was irritated with himself for not playing 18.a5 at once. After 19...d5 20.e5 ♗e7 21.b4! White gets the position he wants. Then Black has more pieces in need of gainful employment than just his knight. **19...♗e7 20.a5 d5!** Suddenly Black's forces slip out. **21.f5?!** Black gets some freedom after 21.e5 b4, but White can still fight for the advantage with 22.♖fc1. Magnus instead chooses a dubious pawn sacrifice. **21...dxe4 22.f6 ♗c5 23.♔h1 ♗c6 24.♕c1 ♗xe3 25.♕xe3 ♖d3 26.♕g1 ♘d6** This is clearly not going the way Magnus had planned. **27.♘f4 ♖f3** Clever, but 27...♖d2 was more straightforward. **28.♖ad1** The obvious 28.fxg7 should be tried but Magnus is dreaming of exploiting an exposed back rank. **28...♘c4 29.♕c5 ♘xa5?!** Black could have made things simpler with 29...♘xb2. **30.♘h5** 30.♗xf3 exf3 31.♕e7 looks like a good swindling chance in time pressure. **30...♘b7 31.♕a7 g6 32.♘g3 ♖xf1+ 33.♘xf1 a5 34.♘g3 ♖d8?** Timman lets Magnus back in the game. After 34...♕f4 White's play soon ebbs out. **35.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 36.♗xe4 ♗xe4+ 37.♘xe4 ♕d5 38.♔g1! h6 39.♕a8+ ♘d8**

40.♕xd5? The ending proves to be lost. With 40.♕xa5! the win is far from simple for Black. **40...exd5 41.♘d6 hxg5 42.♘xb5 ♘c6 43.♔f2 ♘e5 44.♔g3** The best chance was perhaps 44.♔e3. The complications after 44...♘g4+ 45.♔d4 ♘xh2 or 45...♘xf6 are not as easy to calculate properly after over four hours of hard combat. **44...a4** Now Black wins without risk. **45.♘c7 ♘c4 46.♘xd5 ♘xb2 47.♘b4 ♔h7 48.♔f3 ♔h6 49.♔e4 g4 50.♔d5 a3 51.♔d6 g5!** 0-1 After 52.♔e7 ♔g6 Black's knight is free to collect the kingside pawns.

Magnus is good at getting his pieces going. He thrives in open, complicated positions where activity is top priority. This game against Dagur Arngrimsson (2239) from Iceland is a good example.

□ **Dagur Arngrimsson**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Reykjavik 2004

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d5 3.exd5 ♕xd5 4.d4 g6 5.♘f3 There is a clever variation here: 5.dxc5 ♕xc5 6.♗e3 ♕c7 7.♗xa7!? ♖xa7 8.♕d4 and White wins the exchange – but it costs a lot of development. Black can also settle for just sacrificing a pawn for development with 7...♘c6. **5...♗g7 6.c4** This might look tempting, but poses Black no problems. 6.♘a3 is sharper. **6...♕e4+ 7.♗e3 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘f6 9.♘c3** White gains a bit of time but the bold queen remains well placed in the centre. **9...♕e5 10.♗e2 0-0 11.♘db5?!** This is too ambitious. **11...♘c6 12.♕c1 ♗g4!** Black has all of his pieces in play and takes over the initiative. **13.f3 ♗e6 14.♗f4 ♕h5 15.♘c7 ♖ad8 16.♘xe6 fxe6** White has worked hard to split Black's pawn structure but this has cost valuable time. **17.0-0 ♘d4 18.♖e1 ♕f5 19.♗d1 ♘d7** The knight is headed for d3. **20.♗e3 ♘c5 21.♖f1 ♘d3 22.♕b1**

22...♕e5! Magnus has managed to conjure up trickery from nearly nothing. Now both 23.♕xd3 ♘xf3 and 23.♘e4 ♘xb2 lose to the same tactical motif **23.♗f2 ♘xf2! 24.♖xf2 ♕e3** 24...♗h6 was even stronger, when the dark squared bishop enters e3 or f4 with great effect. **25.♕e4?! ♗h6!** Now the bishop can make a strong if belated appearance. **26.♔f1 ♕xe4! 27.fxe4** 27.♘xe4 was a better try even if Black wins the exchange after 27...♗e3. **27...♗e3 28.♖xf8+ ♖xf8+ 29.♗f3** 29.♔e1 ♖f2! is just as hopeless. **29...♘xf3 30.gxf3 ♖xf3+ 31.♔g2 ♖f2+ 32.♔g3 ♖xb2 33.♘d1 ♖e2 34.♔f3 ♖e1 35.♖b1 ♗d4!** Black dominates completely. 0-1

In the fourth round Magnus lost again with white, this time after reckless play against French GM Igor-Alexandre Nataf (2569).

While Magnus had won lovely games in Wijk aan Zee and Moscow, in Iceland his victories came in calm endings.

The opposition in the three wins so far was not so strong but when he also won a nice ending against GM Nikola Sedlak (2539) from Serbia and Montenegro, the GM-norm was again a possibility.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Nikola Sedlak**
Reykjavik 2004

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 g6 Sedlak was probably inspired by Peter Leko, who won a nice game with this against Teimour Radjabov in Linares just before this event. **3.♗xf6 exf6 4.e3 d5 5.g3** Radjabov played 5.c4. Magnus' approach is slower. **5...♗d6 6.♗g2 c6 7.♘d2 0-0** Black could have waited a bit, keeping the option of moving

his h-pawn open. Black has useful moves like f6-f5 and ♘d7-♘f6. **8.♘e2 f5 9.c4** Castling first was more natural. **9...dxc4 10.♘xc4 ♗b4+ 11.♘d2 ♗e6 12.0-0 ♗xd2?** There was no reason to surrender this good bishop. **13.♕xd2 ♗d5 14.♗xd5 ♕xd5 15.♘c3 ♕d8**

16.d5! Black's position is surprisingly difficult even after the reduction of material. **16...cxd5 17.♘xd5 ♘c6 18.♖fd1 ♖e8 19.♖ac1 f6?** Black has problems but things don't improve by making weaknesses like this. **20.b4 ♖e6 21.b5 ♘e5**

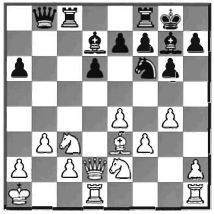
22.♕b4! White already has a decisive advantage. **22...♕f8 23.♕b3!** Winning the exchange. **23...♔g7 24.♘c7 ♖e7 25.♘e6+ ♖xe6 26.♕xe6 ♖d8 27.♕b3 ♖xd1+ 28.♖xd1 ♕c8 29.♔g2 g5 30.f4 ♘f7 31.♕d5 g4 32.♖d2 h5 33.a4 ♔g6** Black has built a kind of fortress. **34.♔f2!** The winning process is fascinating. **34...♕c3 35.♔e2!** Watch this king! **35...♕a1 36.♕xb7 ♕xa4 37.♕d5 ♕b4 38.♖a2 ♕b1 39.♖xa7 ♕b2+ 40.♔d3!** In queen endings the king must often tackle the opponent's queen. **40...♕b1+ 41.♔c4 ♕c1+ 42.♔b4 ♕e1+ 43.♔c5 ♕xe3+ 44.♕d4 ♕c1+ 45.♔b6!** The wandering is over. **45...h4 46.♖c7 ♕h1 47.♕d7!** Black resigned.

Now Magnus needed 2, possibly 2½ from the last three games for another GM-norm. After the opening phase of his game against Russian GM Oleg Korneev (2566) things looked rosy.

□ **Oleg Korneev**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Reykjavik 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♕d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 ♗d7 10.g4 ♖c8 11.♔b1 ♘e5 12.♗e2 White's move order is extremely deliberate. Now the usual black tricks in this variation, with sacrifices here and there, do not work. After 12...♕a5 White can calmly play 13.♘b3 and the queen must go all the way back home since 12...♕c7 13.g5 ♘h5 14.♘d5 ♕d8 allows White to just take on a7. 12...♘c4 is possible, but then we are in a known variation with a tempo more for White since the light-squared bishop usually makes two moves, c4-b3 before capturing on c4, but here White has just made one move with the bishop.**12...b5!?** Magnus thought for an hour over this. This is usually a bad sign, because often the longer you think the more muddled you get. **13.♘cxb5** If White had played 12.h4 instead of

12.♗e2, 13...♘xf3 would have been an exciting possibility, but this kind of thing doesn't work now. **13...a6 14.♘c3 ♘c4 15.♗xc4 ♖xc4 16.b3 ♕b8 17.♔a1 ♖cc8 18.♘de2?** Now Magnus gets a golden opportunity.



18...♗xg4! 19.e5 19.fxg4 ♘xe4 is a catastrophe for White. **19...♗xf3 20.exf6 ♗xf6 21.♗d4** White must surrender the rook since Black also threatened 21...♗xe2. **21...♗xd4 22.♘xd4 ♗xh1 23.♖xh1 ♕b7 24.♖g1 ♖c5 25.♖g3 ♖fc8 26.♔b2**

26...♕d7? A blunder. Black has a clear material advantage but it is not completely clear how he is supposed to mobilise his pawns. **27.♘a4! e5** Black cannot save the rook since White also threatened a fork on b6, but 27...♖d8 was a possibility. Unfortunately White has 28.♕h6 ♖e5 29.♖h3 and Black must sacrifice a pawn with 29...♖h5. Magnus instead tries to ride off the storm by using his pawns. **28.♘xc5 ♖xc5 29.♘e2 d5 30.♖d3 ♕e6 31.a3 a5 32.♘c3 d4 33.♘e4 ♖c8 34.♘g5 ♕e7 35.♖h3 e4** 35...h5 might have been a better try. **36.♕f4 e3** The e-pawn is strong but unfortunately White gets to the buffet first. **37.♘xh7 f5 38.♕xd4** White combines attack and defence. **38...♕c5** 38...e2 39.♘f6 and White wins the queen after a rook check on h7. **39.♕xc5 ♖xc5 40.♘f6+ ♔f7** It might look like Magnus has some chances but not after White's next move. **41.♘g4!** Black resigned. The rook ending holds out no hope after 41...fxg4 42.♖xe3.

This defeat ended all theoretical chances of another GM-norm. Without motivation Magnus also lost the next game, against Icelandic GM Hannes Stefansson, who he had slaughtered in Moscow in just 25 moves. Now Magnus was tortured for 79 moves before he had to give in.

Magnus ended the tournament with a draw against Sigurbjørn Bjørnsson (2337) from Iceland. A rating performance of 2433 and 4½ out of 9 was still around international master level, so this was not a bad result, but compared to recent adventures it was a big disappointment.

Slightly variable results are completely normal and the margins behind success are small, but with hindsight one can find some possible explanations for the inferior performance in Reykjavik. Before the tournament in Moscow Magnus was allowed to stay up late nights playing at the ICC. This worked well then, and so Magnus also got permission to do

this before the event in Iceland. But with a two-hour time difference in the opposite direction the result was not the same.

Magnus normally needs 10-11 hours of sleep to be in top shape. There had been too many 8-hour nights recently and also during the event Magnus did not sleep enough. The entire family was staying at a guest house just outside of Reykjavik where they all slept in the same room. The conditions were very cosy, but not ideal for Magnus, and his preparation for games was worse than usual.

Towards the end of the event there were also many journalists who wanted to talk to Magnus. When the chance of a GM-norm evaporated with the loss to Korneev in round seven, the family loosened the reins and let the press get what they wanted. It is not so easy to say no when asked politely, and it was even harder to say no to Icelandic TV after Magnus was granted a spot in the star-studded blitz and quick play tournaments just afterwards. Magnus eventually just ran out of energy.

In the blitz event after the last round of the main tournament Magnus was exhausted. As is usual in Iceland, the event started quite late. They began at 7 p.m. so that the spectators could come home from work and have dinner before following the games either on the Internet or at the playing hall.

This caused some problems in Norway. It was well known in the media that Magnus would face Kasparov and Karpov in the event, and journalists were prepared. NRK's regional morning news for eastern Norway wanted to have my comments to Magnus' meetings with these chess legends and these clashes were clearly a media treat.

Unfortunately Magnus would meet Kasparov quite late but Karpov was scheduled for the third round, about 8 p.m., though this is also late for journalistic deadlines. I had to try and keep my chatter and commentary limited to just the game in order not to delay the editing process. It was still a long time until broadcast but the journalists had already long been working overtime and wanted to go home to their families.

I explained that Magnus was capable of beating Karpov. He was strong enough, but Kasparov was on a completely different level. Kasparov is also extremely ambitious and as a rule goes for the throat from move one. You should be happy to survive the opening against him.

The game against Karpov developed quietly. Eventually Karpov acquired a small advantage but just when it began to get exciting the organisers ran into problems with their Internet connection. The live transmission of games and moves works fine when there is a slow time limit, but when moves are coming in a matter of seconds and electronic sensors register the moves, trouble is always around the corner. The time limit in the blitz tournament was five minutes per player for the entire game, with an additional three seconds added per completed move. We just got glimpses of the games at intervals. Suddenly it looked as if Karpov had done something stupid and just afterwards the former world champion was mated. For the press this was a sensation – Magnus had beaten Karpov!

That Magnus had not done especially well in the rest of the tournament drowned completely in the flood of hysteria. Magnus continued in the same style as in Wijk aan Zee, playing sharply and boldly. When not in top form this can backfire. Magnus got a lot of nice positions but had to settle for 4 out of 15 and second to last in the field of sixteen. It made no difference, the press had the sensation they were looking for.

In 1983 I experienced a little media breakthrough when I beat ex-world champion Boris Spassky in a tournament in Gjøvik at the age of sixteen, but this was nothing compared to the reams written about Magnus after the win over Karpov. By 6:15 in the morning my phone had started to ring – a radio station wanted a comment. National radio station P2 had the game as one of its top three stories in all news broadcasts that morning and at 7:30 a.m. the tape from the evening before was broadcast on the regional radio news on P1. Then things really started to take off.

Magnus, happily unaware of the quake he had set in motion, slept like an angel until one in the afternoon and was not available. His father fielded some calls, but I think most of the avalanche was aimed at me. The media was screaming for material and it was to be a very hectic day.

The press tends to be a flock of sheep, all bumping over each other but there are a creative few that want different angles. I was suddenly in focus as Magnus' trainer and got to pick songs on cultural radio shows and asked who I would most like to be stuck in an elevator with (Janet Jackson) by newspaper Dagsavisen.

When Magnus, well rested after twelve hours of sleep, went out that evening and drew with Garry Kasparov it nearly knocked the wind out of me, and the gathered media.

Kasparov had only finished in second place in the blitz tournament the day before. The winner would now meet the last place finisher in the quick play event and with Magnus second last there it was now time to meet the second seed. The Icelandic and Norwegian media gathered, and I was sitting in a hectic newsroom at NRK's evening TV news.

The game was supposed to begin at 7 p.m., precisely when the evening news starts, and I was ready watching the Internet coverage with a cameraman by my side to tape my commentary to the live game. For some reason the game was delayed and suddenly an editor hit a button and instead sent a clip where my NTG students talked about Magnus. Clearly, they wanted the Magnus report early in the programme and couldn't wait any longer.

In Iceland, Kasparov had misunderstood the starting time. He arrived half an hour late, clearly upset over the 'stupidity' of the organisers who had failed to inform him properly – there was no question of error on his part. The other participants disliked this episode. Anyone else would have found their clock running and their time expiring, but since the Icelanders had paid 40,000 dollars to get Kasparov, they presumably wanted to get their money's worth out of him.

So we missed a live broadcast of the game on the country's biggest news programme. Instead, I sat and commented the action for a cameraman and a reporter. After an hour of taping, about ten seconds

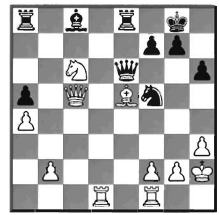
was eventually used on the nightly news, plus some footage from Iceland.

After the game I told the stunned news room that Kasparov had been lucky to escape with a draw. Magnus had played brilliantly and had the world number one reeling. But with just 25 minutes and an extra ten seconds per move for the entire game the ticking clock makes life difficult, especially against a player of Kasparov's class. He has not been the undisputed top player in the world since the age of 23 by accident.

Even Kasparov admitted after the game that Magnus had had a winning position – rare words to come out of Kasparov's mouth. Firstly, he is only very seldom losing and he is not exactly known for making confessions. He also said that Magnus, given the right conditions, can fight to be the best player in the world.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Garry Kasparov**
Reykjavik 2004

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.e3 ♕a5 A surprising choice of opening from Kasparov. **7.♘d2** The safest alternative. Kasparov won two fine games in his 1984 candidates match against Vasily Smyslov with 7.cxd5 ♘xd5 8.♕d2, but one does not play like this without extensive preparation, at least not against Kasparov. **7...♗b4 8.♕c2 0-0 9.♗e2** 9.♗d3? dxc4 is a well-known trap. **9...e5 10.0-0 exd4 11.♘b3 ♕b6 12.exd4** After 12.♘xd4 dxc4 13.♗xc4 Black has 13...♕c5 and White must take on f6. **12...dxc4 13.♗xc4 a5 14.a4 ♕c7 15.♖ae1!** White takes control of the only open file on the board. **15...h6 16.♗h4 ♗d6 17.h3! ♘b6** If Kasparov knew the trouble in store he might have chosen the safer 17...b6. **18.♗xf6!** Magnus thought a while before this. **18...♘xc4 19.♘e4! ♗h2+** The position is enormously complicated but Kasparov nevertheless made this decision quickly. 19...gxf6?? 20.♘xf6+ leads to mate at once but both 19...♗b4 and 19...♗e6 were interesting options. **20.♔h1 ♘d6?** Kasparov presumably has not seen Magnus' next move. If he had he might have pulled the emergency brake with 20...♘b6, even though White is better after 21.g3 ♗xh3 22.♗e5 ♕d8 23.♔xh2 ♗xf1 24.♖xf1. **21.♔xh2!** Now it was Magnus' turn to move instantly. **21...♘xe4+ 22.♗e5 ♘d6 23.♕c5** Also 23.d5 was strong. **23...♖d8 24.d5 ♕d7 25.♘d4!** Magnus has the world number one on the ropes. 25...cxd5 26.♗xd6 ♕xd6 27.♖e8+ ♔h7 28.♕xd6 ♖xd6 29.♖c1 wins at once for White. **25...♘f5** Kasparov sees no alternative to giving up a pawn and hoping for the best. **26.dxc6 bxc6 27.♘xc6 ♖e8 28.♖d1 ♕e6**



29.♖fe1 According to Jacob Aagaard, who annotated this game deeply for the Swedish chess magazine Schacknytt, Magnus could have secured a winning advantage here with 29.♗c7!. After 29...♗b7 30.♘xa5 ♗xg2 31.♔xg2 ♘h4+ 32.♔g3

♕e2 33.♕d5! White has nothing to fear and Black has no other tricks to try. In our analysis I tried to convince him that there must be something decisive for White here, but Magnus thought it had to be right to put the rook on e1 **29...♗b7** Kasparov has managed to conjure up a tactical motif. **30.♘d4** It is understandable that Magnus doesn't go in for 30.♘xa5 ♗xg2! against a player like Kasparov and with so little time to think. After 31.♔xg2? ♘h4+ Black has a very dangerous attack. True, the computer still claims that White has a large advantage after 31.♗xg7!, but for a human this variation is almost impossible to see. **30...♘xd4 31.♕xd4 ♕g6 32.♕g4?!** Magnus could have played for a win without risk with 32.f3, but most of the life has gone out of the position. Kasparov has managed to avoid the worst. **32...♕xg4 33.hxg4 ♗c6 34.b3 f6 35.♗c3 ♖xe1 36.♖xe1 ♗d5 37.♖b1 ♔f7 38.♔g3 ♖b8 39.b4 axb4 40.♗xb4** It is no longer possible to win. **40...♗c4 41.a5 ♗a6 42.f3 ♔g6 43.♔f4 h5 44.gxh5+ ♔xh5 45.♖h1+ ♔g6 46.♗c5 ♖b2 47.♔g3 ♖a2 48.♗b6 ♔f7 49.♖c1 g5 50.♖c7+ ♔g6 51.♖c6 ♗f1 52.♗f2** Draw.

This was not just a sensation for Norway's media. For example, one of Magnus' great-aunts living in Mexico could read about the draw with Kasparov in the Spanish-language magazine Hola. There were about 1,500 watching the game live at ICC and surely even more following it on the Icelandic web site.

In the next game against Kasparov Magnus played, in his own words, 'like a child'. He lost quickly and was knocked out of the cup event. Still a draw against Kasparov is a rare achievement. I have lost three times to this monster with a thousand eyes, who sees everything', as the late English GM Tony Miles once described him.

Even if the Iceland trip was not a sporting success, it was Magnus' definitive media breakthrough in Norway. He glided through it all. Magnus could have turned up on TV programmes every day for the next week but declined all of it, and was not swayed that the offers came from the most popular news and talk shows in Norway.

The temptation to succumb to the delights of fame were resisted by both Magnus and his family. Instead of rushing between TV-studios they made a trip to a cabin in remote Filefjell to get away from all the fuss.

The next event on his schedule was the strong closed Sigeman invitational in Malmö and Copenhagen. There were three weeks to wait until the ten-man event began on 30 April, a long time for someone with Magnus' appetite for chess. The rest of the family had a warm holiday coming to them, and these wishes could be fulfilled with a trip to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates from 19-27 April, but the trip seemed expensive and complicated.

Henrik made inquiries and learned from the organisers that the tournament was full – the hall capacity at the annual open this year demanded that they set a limit to the number of participants. When asked who wanted to know, Henrik replied, 'My 13-year-old son Magnus, rated 2552.' 'You mean 2252?' 'No, 2552.' 'Really? What is his FIDE-ID?'

When the organisers understood who they were dealing with, the tune quickly changed. The tournament committee would be consulted and a place certainly found. There were still uncertainties about the cost, but Norway's FIDE bigwig Morten Sand managed to arrange a free stay for the entire family.

By now the Carlsen girls had decided Dubai was exciting and Magnus was pining for a new event. The Carlsen parents gradually grew enthusiastic and decided that this trip would be the last major journey of their sabbatical year. Magnus and his mother would return to Malmö after the two-week event in the UAE while Henrik and the girls would spend an extra week in Dubai.

Just before he left I played blitz with Magnus, and have to admit that I was surprised by just how good he was. It took a long time before I won my first game. A trainer should not really knock his students around but this was a case of desperately trying to avoid humiliation. When we stopped, late in the evening, I thought that the next time I saw Magnus he would be a grandmaster.

The family was well received when they landed at the airport and the organisers whisked them through immigrations and security and out into the 35°C heat.

Dubai is an eldorado for shopping, with an astonishing choice of western shops and top restaurants at reasonable prices. In the gold souk, a market street specialising in gold, sixty percent of the world's gold is bought and sold, from simple pieces to lavish diadems.

The oil riches of the past fifty years are evidenced in the city by formidable skyscrapers and a modern infrastructure. Its location at the mouth of a river dug to receive larger ships is opportune, even if the rest of the landscape is more like a desert. There are a remarkable number of fine hotels in Dubai, including the Burj al Arab, the world's only seven-star hotel.

The Carlsen family had to make do with a three-star establishment, but that was grand as well, with an excellent swimming pool on the roof. The heat limited their options though, as temperatures rose to 40°C and made even swimming unbearable. They tried a two-kilometre stroll to a shopping centre but turned back to the hotel after just 200 metres – the heat was too much for them. Only Henrik made the trip, something that shocked the organisers when they heard about it. A bus took them the five kilometres to the playing hall.

The tournament was sponsored by a chess-loving sheik that had also helped finance the fancy playing hall with permanent equipment for 180 players. The 'Dubai Chess and Culture Club' was built like a chess rook surrounded by lower buildings. The facilities and atmosphere were first-rate.

I also tried to enter the event at the last minute, but got the same message the Carlsens originally received – the tournament was full. Waving my GM title around didn't help.

The event began with 38 GMs in a field of 138 and Magnus was ranked number 26. He again did his 'slow starter' routine, beginning with a disappointing draw against P. Doostkam (2223) from Iran. He was doing well with black in a King's Indian Defence but was not alert when it was time to

put the ball in the net. In the next round he glittered against Deepan Chakkravarthy (2331) from India. In the next issue of New In Chess, Magnus was the cover boy and chose to annotate this game.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Deepan Chakkravarthy**
Dubai 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 e5 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.♘xe5 ♘xe4 7.♘xe4 ♕d4 Magnus was aware that this was playable for Black, but didn't know much more than that. **8.0-0 ♕xe5 9.d4!?** In known style. **9...cxd4** Also after 9...♕xd4 10.♕f3! White has a large lead in development. **10.♖e1 ♗e6** 10...♗e7 11.♗g5 is about the same. **11.♗g5! ♗e7** Black does not have it easy. On 11...♕d5 Magnus had planned 12.♗f6! and Black still has a lot of work to do before he completes his development. **12.f4!** Even better than 12.♘f6+. **12...♕d5 13.♗xe7 ♔xe7**

14.f5! ♕xf5 15.♕xd4 The Black king is stripped in record time. **15...♕d5** Black has no defence. **16.♕b4+ c5 17.♘xc5 a5 18.♕a3 ♕d4+ 19.♔h1 ♕b4 20.♕e3** 1-0 Black could have tried 20...♕g4. After 21.h3 ♕g6 22.♕a3! Black could then resign with a clear conscience.

There was also a comprehensive tournament report from Dubai in the respected chess journal. The reporter, Russian GM Evgeny Vladimirov (2621), one of Magnus's victims in a brilliant attacking game', did not hide how impressed he was by Magnus.

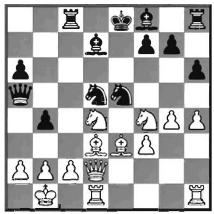
In his preparation for the game, he writes, he had a feeling of déjà vu. He was reminded of something and it wasn't long before he knew what it was. 'Young Kasparov! The same ability to build up the initiative with simple means, the same impressive calculating ability and the same penetration to the heart of the position.

'A great future', the traditional expression used about big talents, is already too modest for Magnus, Vladimirov writes, and predicts that Magnus' future is as the world's best player. A comparison with Kasparov can mean nothing else.

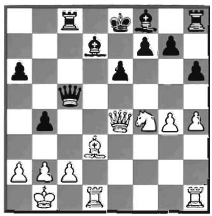
□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Evgeny Vladimirov**
Dubai 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f3 9.f4 is the usual move. **9...♖c8 10.♗e3** Magnus gets ready to advance the g-pawn, though at the cost of a tempo, which is very valuable in a position with an attacking race on opposite flanks. **10...♘e5 11.g4 h6** This delays the g-pawn's advance but when it finally comes it will have more weight. Now it is even more important to arrive first. **12.h4 b5 13.♗d3** Vladimirov writes in New In Chess that he was more afraid of 13.♗e2 b4 14.♘b1. White's g-pawn is menacing but Magnus did not like the passive knight on b1. This is typical Magnus, sometimes

he is so focused on activity that he forgets to calculate concrete variations. **13...b4 14.♘ce2 d5!** Now Black gets in this critical advance since 15.g5 dxe4 16.fxe4 gives Black a square for the knight on g4. **15.exd5 ♘xd5 16.♘f4 ♕a5 17.♔b1**

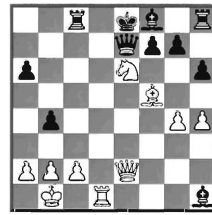


17...♘xf3! This was a cold shower. **18.♕f2** After 18.♘xf3 ♘c3+ 19.bxc3 bxc3 works since White no longer has a knight to block the b-line and 20.♕c1 ♗a3 costs White his queen. So it was time to wake up, calm down and try to make the best out of the situation. **18...♘xe3** Black has a dizzying amount of things he can capture, but White has compensation regardless. **19.♕xe3 ♘xd4 20.♕xd4 ♕c5 21.♕e4!** Vladimirov could have played for a win without risk after 21.♗xa6 ♕xd4 22.♖xd4 ♖a8 23.♖hd1 ♗c6, but Magnus has a fantastic idea that keeps his counterplay going.



21...♕c6 What really happens on 21...♗c6 and taking on h1? This was a topic hotly debated by the Norwegian audience. Vladimirov writes in New In Chess that he had an 'uneasy feeling' and chose to chicken out, even though he was not completely sure about what was happening. On the plane to the world championship in Libya two months later I was sitting next to the Lithuanian GM Sarunas Sulskis and took the chance to test him a bit and set up the position on a pocket chess set to see if he could discover what Magnus had seen.

Twenty minutes later he finally arrived at the correct answer, but of course he knew in advance that there was something there. I didn't see it until long afterwards, when Magnus showed me the lovely variation 21...♗c6 22.♕e2 ♗xh1 23.♘xe6 ♕e7 24.♗f5!!



analysis diagram

Black has no defence against 25.♖d8+ and 26.♘c7 mate! It is understandable that Vladimirov compares Magnus with Kasparov when he has experienced such variations first-hand. **22.♕e2 a5** The plan was 22...♗d6 but then White has a strong attack after 23.♘h5 0-0 24.g5! **23.♘h5!** It is rare that a knight on the edge is so strong. Black doesn't manage to get his

pieces out. **23...a4 24.♖hf1 ♖c7 25.♕f2 ♗c8**

26.♕d4 This wins comfortably but 26.♘f6+ gxf6 27.♕xf6 with the double threats of 28.♗b5 and 28.♕xh8 was more spectacular. After 26...♔e7 27.♘g8+ ♔e8 28.♗g6 ♕b7 29.♘f6+ is also quite pretty. **26...♖d7 27.♘xg7+ ♗xg7 28.♕xg7 ♖f8 29.♕xh6** Black does not have a drop of counterplay but Magnus has plans of queening his h-pawn if nothing else turns up. **29...b3 30.axb3 axb3 31.cxb3** There is nothing to fear. **31...♗a6 32.♗xa6 ♕xa6 33.♕f4 ♖a7** Counterplay on the a-file is the only hope but Black will be mated first. **34.♕b8+ ♔e7 35.♕b4+** 1-0 After 35...♔e8 36.♖d8+! ♔xd8 37.♕xf8+ Black's king is grilled by White's heavy pieces.

The round before Magnus beat Hatim Al-Hadarani (2356) from Yemen and in the next two rounds he played draws against grandmasters Pentyala Harikrishna (2599) from India and Baadur Jobava (2616) from Georgia. With 4 out of 6 Magnus needed just 1½ out of 3 to make his third and final GM norm.

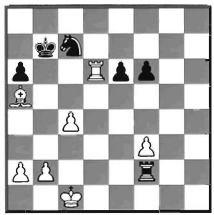
A clean win against Indian GM Surya Shekhar Ganguly (2582) in round seven was a large stride towards the title.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Surya Shekhar Ganguly**
Dubai 2004

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 ♘e4 3.♗f4 c5 4.f3 ♘f6 5.dxc5 b6 6.♘c3 It is well-known that Black gets plenty of counterplay in the case of 6.cxb6 ♕xb6. **6...bxc5 7.e4 d6?** 7...♘c6 intending 8.e5 ♕c7! is more accurate. Now Black gets problems. **8.e5! dxe5 9.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10.0-0-0+ ♘bd7 11.♗xe5** White is clearly better in this ending thanks to Black's exposed king position. **11...♗b7 12.♘h3 ♔c8 13.♗g3 h6 14.♗c4 e6 15.♘f4 ♗e7 16.♘b5** The intention is to gain the bishop pair. **16...g5** Magnus gives the variation 16...♘b6 17.♗xe6+ fxe6 18.♘g6 ♖e8 19.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 20.♘d6+ and White wins something back. **17.♘d3 ♗d5 18.♗xd5 ♘xd5 19.♖he1!** Magnus calmly centralises his pieces. **19...a6 20.♘d6+ ♗xd6 21.♗xd6 c4 22.♘e5 ♘xe5 23.♗xe5 ♖d8** 23...f6 24.♗d4 (24.♗g3 ♔d7 25.♖d4 ♖ac8; 24.♗c3 ♘xc3 25.bxc3 is also clearly better for White.) 24...♖e8 25.b3 cxb3 26.axb3 with a small advantage for White due to his strong bishop. **24.♖e4 ♘b6**

Around here the organisers' home page hung and there was a long pause in the Internet coverage, which gave spectators a

chance to ponder the position. **25.♖xd8+** 25.♗d4 ♘d5 26.♗g7 looked more convincing, and Magnus later agreed. **25...♔xd8 26.♗g7** Magnus has calculated very deeply, and then it is very easy to overlook or misjudge something. **26...♔e7 27.♗xh6 f6 28.h4** Otherwise the bishop will not return home. **28...gxh4 29.♖xh4 ♖h8?!** 29...c3 was a better try. **30.♗g5 ♖g8** 30...♖xh4 31.♗xh4 is probably won but Black can also fight here with 31...c3 32.bxc3 ♘c4. One variation is 33.♔d1 ♘e3+ 34.♔d2 ♘xg2 35.♗g3 f5 36.♔e2 f4 37.♔f2 ♘e3 38.♗xf4 ♘d1+ and the outcome is far from clear. **31.♗e3** Now, however, it is one-way traffic. **31...♘d5 32.♗c5+ ♔d7 33.♖xc4 ♖xg2 34.♖g4! ♖h2** After 34...♖xg4 35.fxg4 White wins easily. **35.c4 ♘c7 36.♖d4+ ♔c6 37.♗b4 ♖f2 38.♖d6+ ♔b7 39.♗a5!**



The bishop's triumph over the knight. **39...♖f1+ 40.♔d2 ♖f2+ 41.♔e3 ♖c2 42.♔d3 ♖c1 43.♖b6+** After 43...♔a7 44.♖c6 Black loses nearly all his pawns.

Now Magnus needed only one draw from his last two games to become the world's youngest grandmaster. The first chance came against Alexey Fedorov (2616) from Belarus. Magnus had come well prepared. Fedorov always plays the King's Gambit with white, an opening that really belongs on the scrapheap of history, but has received a new lease on life in recent years. In the good old days one was supposed to sacrifice all your pieces and win with brilliant attacking chess when playing the King's Gambit – the modern method is much more positional. White gets nice central control for his pawn. One of the advantages of being materially ahead is that it gives you the option of sacrificing something back. Magnus chose a variation where he returns the pawn at once.

□ **Alexey Fedorov**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Dubai 2004

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘e5 d6 The variations after 5...♘f6 are also considered good for Black. **6.♘xg4 ♘f6 7.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 8.♘c3 ♘c6** The latest rage. 8...c6 and 8...♗e6, the old variations, are not supposed to be as good any more. **9.♗b5** Magnus had studied an article in the New In Chess Yearbook 67 that contained an exciting postal game between Schreiber and Jensen from a thematic tournament in 2000-2001 that went like this: 9.♘d5 ♕g6 10.d3 ♕g3+ 11.♔d2 ♘b4! (11...♘e7 allows 12.♕e1 with roughly equal play) 12.♘xb4 (after 12.♘xc7+ ♔d8 13.♘xa8 ♕e3+ 14.♔c3 ♕c5+ White has to settle for a draw with 15.♔d2 since 15.♔b3? ♘xc2! wins at once for Black.) 12...♕e3+ 13.♔c3 ♗g7+ 14.♔b3 ♕b6 15.♗xf4 a5 16.a3 ♗d7! and Black threatens a bishop check on a4. The author of the article was ... yes, Alexey Fedorov! **9...♔d8!** 9...a6 10.♗xc6+ bxc6 is similar but White has 10.♘d5

♕g6 11.♕f3! **10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.d3 ♖g8 12.♕f3 ♗h6 13.♕f2 ♖b8! 14.♘e2.** White has no good alternatives.

14...♖xb2! Magnus knew this motif from a game between Short and Shirov from Las Vegas 1999 where Black had played 9...a6 instead of 9...♔d8. The sacrifice is even better here. Black gets plenty of pawns for the exchange. **15.♗xb2 ♕xb2 16.0-0** In Westerinen-Bae, Oslo 2002, 16.♕d4 ♕xc2 17.♖c1 ♕xa2 led to an advantage for Black. **16...♕xc2 17.♘xf4** Fedorov thought for a while and presumably found nothing better. **17...♕xf2+** with a draw offer, which Fedorov happily accepted. After 18.♖xf2 ♗g7 19.♖c1 ♗d4 20.♖xc6 ♖g4 21.♘d5 ♗b7 22.♖c4 ♗xf2+ 23.♔xf2 ♖xh4 24.♘xc7 ♖h5 Black is a bit better, but a draw was enough to secure the grandmaster title.

This event did not go unnoticed. Ole Valaker at Nettavisen was up to date, one could even say overly so. Before the last round he ran a headline 'Today Magnus (13) becomes a grandmaster'. After a severe scolding from Henrik Carlsen, the headline was toned down to 'can become a grandmaster'

The game against Fedorov had been transmitted live on the Internet so it took just moments after the draw was a fact until the news broke, and the media circus began again. If Magnus was hard to find in Reykjavik, it was even worse in Dubai. He was celebrating with an ice cream at McDonald's and his father had turned off his mobile phone. That left me, and I spent the entire evening on the phone with journalists.

Strange things happen in the wake of this kind of publicity. When my NTG students and I were gathered at school the next day to watch Magnus in the final round, a message was sent to the ICC spectators that Magnus' brain was being discussed on a serious Norwegian radio show. We managed to tune in and heard the end of a discussion where a brain researcher discussed how it was possible for a thirteen year old to become a chess grandmaster.

Magnus has undoubtedly given Norwegian chess a massive lift, but he has also attracted attention abroad. A month later none other than '60 Minutes', perhaps the best known television news program in the world, rang from CBS in the USA, wanting to speak to Magnus.

But the Carlsens keep their feet firmly planted on the ground. Henrik fielded the call from CBS and just told them to call back later because they were eating dinner – possibly a shocking first for the journalist who rang. In any event, they didn't call back, but did follow up by e-mail promising to get in touch again.

A few days later the Sunday Telegraph Magazine got an interview. It was easier to say yes to a major English paper than Norwegian media that would be scrutinised by his schoolmates. International fame is not noticed in the same way.

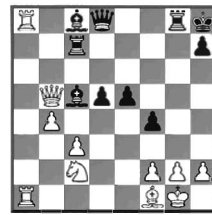
In the final round in Dubai Magnus played a quick draw with GM Viorel Iordachescu (2627) from Moldova, giving him a share of second place and 6½ out of 9. His rating performance was an impressive 2674. For the third time this year Magnus had achieved a world-class performance. In the Sigeman event to come he would confirm his status with yet another GM-result.

There was little time between tournaments. After the prize ceremony on 28 April he sat up past midnight at the ICC. His father gave in hoping that this would help Magnus sleep on the plane. A few hours later, at 4 a.m., Magnus and his mother were on their way. After a 14-hour journey they just made the end of the opening ceremony in Malmö, where the first five rounds of the Sigeman would be held. At 2.30 p.m. the next day a new tournament would begin.

With just an hour's sleep on the plane two nights before, a slightly groggy Magnus nevertheless went out hard the next afternoon. Full of self-confidence, he sacrificed a piece against Swedish GM Jonny Hector (2512). In the final position Magnus was probably winning, but didn't have the time to make sure.

□ **Jonny Hector**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Malmö 2004

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.♘d5 ♗g7 11.c3 f5 12.exf5 ♗xf5 13.♘c2 0-0 14.♘ce3 ♗e6 15.♗d3 f5 16.0-0 There is a lot of advanced opening theory in this variation. Among other things, there is supposed to be a forced draw after 16.♗c2 f4 17.♕h5 ♖f7! 18.♗xh7+ ♔f8 19.♗f5 ♕e8 20.♗xe6 ♕xe6 21.♕g4 ♕h6 22.♘f5 ♕e6 23.♘fe3 ♕h6. **16...♖a7 17.a4 ♘e7** For me, not knowing this beforehand, this all looks strange, but Magnus knows what he is doing. **18.♘xe7+ ♖xe7 19.axb5 axb5 20.♗xb5** There is an exciting queen sacrifice after 20.♗c2 d5!? 21.♗b3 f4 22.♘xd5 ♖d7 23.♘b4 ♖xd1 24.♗xe6+ ♔h8 25.♖axd1, but Black should at least not be in danger of losing after 25...♕e7 26.♗d5 e4 27.♖fe1 e3. 20.♗xf5 has the idea 20...♗xf5? 21.♘xf5 ♖xf5 22.♕d5+ and 23.♖a8, but Black can take first with his rook on f5. **20...d5 21.♖a6** Finally the players are on their own. **21...♔h8 22.♕a4 f4 23.♘c2 ♖g8 24.♖a1 ♗c8 25.♖a8 ♗f8 26.♗f1 ♖eg7** Magnus has taken up an instructive deployment of forces. **27.♕c6 ♖c7 28.♕b5 ♗c5 29.b4**



29...♗xf2+!? He can't resist but this is hardly correct. After 29...♗e7 Black has pressure against the c-pawn and is doing fine. **30.♔xf2 ♖xc3 31.♘e1** 31.♕e2 with the idea 31...e4 32.♕d1! was also possible. **31...f3?!** This was the point, but also 31...e4 presents White with real challenges. **32.♘xf3 e4 33.♘e1 ♕f6+**

34.♔g1 ♖f8 35.♖8a2?! After 35.♗e2 White's position is critical. Black can roll on with 35...d4, but after 36.♔h1! White can answer 36.d3 with 36.♘xd3 exd3 37.♗xd3 and White is two healthy pawns ahead. But this is not easy to find, especially when short of time.

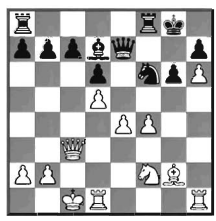
35...♖a3! Magnus is a master of practical play. What does White do now? Black threatens 36...♗a6 and 36.♖xa3 ♕f2+ leads to mate on the back rank. **36.♕e2?** with time running out it is especially hard to find 36.♘f3! and White can still hope for an advantage after 36...♖xa2 37.♖xa2 exf3 38.♖f2!. **36...♕b6+ 37.♔h1 ♕f6 38.♔g1 ♕d4+** Draw. Unfortunately Magnus was also short of time. After 39.♔h1 ♗g4! Black is clearly winning. Black wins both pieces on White's first rank after 40.♕b5 ♖xa2 41.♖xa2 and now the move Magnus hadn't seen in time, 41...♕d1!

In the next round he went down without a fight against Danish GM Curt Hansen (2635). In the Sigeman, Hansen would have one of the results of his life before blundering horribly in the opening of the last round, getting a lost position after just eight moves against compatriot Peter Heine Nielsen (2628). This would allow Heine to pull even with Hansen with 6 out of 9. After a strong finish, Magnus would pass everyone but these two.

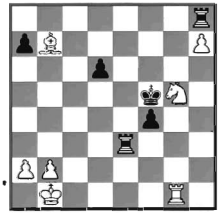
It also looked grim in the third round when Magnus blundered a whole piece in a nice position against Swedish GM Tiger Hillarp Persson (2513). Incredibly, he not only fought his way back to a drawn position, he actually scored the whole point.

□ **Tiger Hillarp Persson**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Malmö 2004

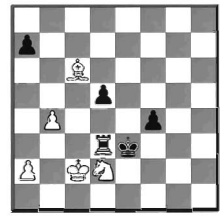
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 e5!? Magnus knows something about just about everything. **4.dxe5 ♘h5 5.♘h3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 ♗e7 7.♗xe7 ♕xe7 8.♘c3 ♕xe5 9.g4 ♘g7 10.f4 ♕e7 11.♘d5 ♕d8 12.♕d2 0-0 13.♕c3 ♘e8 14.♘f2** Tiger finally diverges from the stem game Kramnik-Leko, Tilburg 1998, where Black was doing well after 14.g5 ♘e7 15.♘f6+ ♘xf6 16.gxf6 ♘f5 17.e4 ♖e8 18.♘g5 c5! and the knight goes into d4. **14...♘e7 15.g5 ♘xd5 16.cxd5 d6 17.h4 ♘g7** Magnus had not seen that White's next move was possible but was satisfied anyway. **18.h5! ♕e7** 18...♘xh5 19.♖xh5 gxh5 20.♘e4 is hardly tempting. **19.♗g2 ♗f5 20.h6 ♘e8 21.e4 f6! 22.gxf6 ♘xf6 23.0-0 ♗d7**



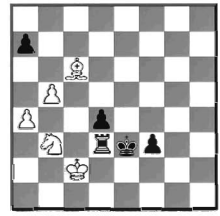
It may look clumsy and cramped, but in fact the position is fine for Magnus. White has problems maintaining his far-flung pawns. **24.♗f3 c6 25.dxc6 ♗xc6 26.♕d4 ♘d7! 27.♘h3 ♘c5 28.♖he1 ♖ae8 29.f5 ♘xe4??** Magnus has played wonderfully and can now secure an advantage with 29...♕f6!. Instead, comes a total collapse. **30.♖xe4?!** This also wins, but 30.♗xe4 is a piece more for absolutely nothing. **30...♗xe4 31.♗xe4 ♕e5** Magnus had clearly overlooked 31...♕xe4 32.♕g7 mate. **32.♕xe5 ♖xe5 33.♘g5 ♖c8+ 34.♔b1 gxf5 35.♗d5+ ♔f8 36.♘xh7+ ♔e7** It is nearly unbelievable that Magnus can fight at all after his howler on move 29. **37.♘g5 ♖h8 38.h7** 38.♘f3 is simpler. **38...♔f6 39.♘f3 ♖e3?!** It is not easy for White to win after 39...♖xh7 40.♘xe5 dxe5. **40.♖h1 ♔g6 41.♖g1+ ♔f6 42.♘g5 f4 43.♗xb7 ♔f5**



44.♗d5? Strange things often happen in Tiger's games, but as a rule it is he who performs miracles. After 44.♗f3 ♖xh7 45.♘xh7 ♖xf3 White should win but some technical difficulties remain. **44...♖g3!** Suddenly all of Black's problems are solved. **45.♘f3 ♖xg1+ 46.♘xg1 ♖xh7** The position is probably drawn, but Tiger is shaken by the transformation of the last few moves and cannot adapt to the new situation. **47.♘f3 ♖c7!** Cutting off White's king. **48.b4 ♖c3 49.♔b2 ♖d3 50.♗c6 d5 51.♘e1 ♖d1 52.♘f3 ♖d3 53.♘e1 ♖d1 54.♘f3 ♔e4!** Yes! Magnus plays for a win to the great delight of spectators at the ICC. **55.♔c2 ♖d3 56.♘d2+ ♔e3**



57.♘b3?? The final error. 57.♘f1+ forces a draw by repetition since 57...♔d4 is answered by 58.♗xd5! and 57...♔e2? 58.♗b5 loses the rook. **57...d4! 58.b5 f3 59.a4**



59...♖xb3! There were several ways to finish but Magnus always prefers the most aesthetic. **60.♔xb3 d3** White resigned. One of the pawns promotes.

I watched this game in astonishment from my sofa. The day after Magnus became a GM I accomplished the feat of falling off my bicycle on the way home and breaking

my leg. I was lucky to escape with just three days in hospital. When I was finally rigged up with my leg in the air, my laptop in front of me and painkillers inside me, life wasn't so bad. Suddenly I had plenty of time to watch the live transmissions from the Sigeman.

Magnus gradually picked up steam and this was a pleasure to watch. Before all engines were firing he had two draws with GM Alexander Belyavsky (2667) from Slovenia and IM Jacob Aagard (2400) from Denmark. A start of 2½/5 from the Malmö leg was quite good considering the circumstances, and big things started after the rest day and move to Copenhagen.

All the Carlsens were on the move, with father Henrik and Magnus' three sisters arriving from their extended holiday in Dubai. Now Magnus's mother, who sent him off every day with a kiss on the cheek and some raisins and juice in his bag, would get a break from goalkeeping on the football field every day.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam also arrived in Copenhagen that day. He had already decided that the next issue of New In Chess would be about the world's youngest GM, and made the trip to see the prodigy in action. There was plenty of media interest in Denmark as well, but Magnus was not easy to track down, keeping his focus on chess and turning down interviews as a rule.

He did agree to the organisers' request to hold a press conference on the free day. GM Sune Berg-Hansen was compere and made sure the questions measured up. He stepped in when a few journalists asked about the dangers of putting everything on a career in chess. Those are myths and tired ideas, when outsiders insist on associating following a dream and using talent with some kind of loss,' said Berg-Hansen, but Magnus had no problems with answering for himself and charmed the seven journalists present.

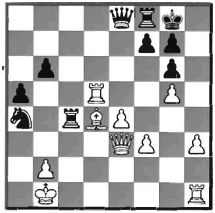
Ten Geuzendam also managed to get Magnus talking, and used nine pages to portray the 'whole story' in New In Chess. With a report from Dubai as well, Magnus was now famous even to those in the chess community that somehow had failed to notice him before.

The playing conditions at the Quality Hotel in Høje Taastrup, 30 kilometres outside of downtown Copenhagen, were outstanding, and Magnus was particularly pleased to find table tennis and billiards new options. His leisure time was now secure and his play soared at once, starting against Heine Nielsen.

□ Magnus Carlsen
■ Peter Heine Nielsen
Copenhagen 2004

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗f5 6.♘h4 ♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 8.g4 ♗g6 9.♘xg6 hxg6 10.e3 e6 11.♗xc4 ♗b4 12.♗d2 ♘bd7 13.g5 ♘d5 14.e4 ♘5b6 15.♗b3 a5 16.♕e2

16...c5!? The Danish GM had analysed Magnus' game against Andriasian in the European Youth championships in Budva from the previous autumn and prepared this novelty. In the other game Magnus got a large advantage after 16...e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.0-0-0 ♘d3+? 19.♔b1 ♘c5 20.♘b5!. **17.d5 c4 18.♗xc4 ♘xc4 19.♕xc4 0-0!** Magnus had not thought of this. **20.0-0-0** 20.dxe6 ♘e5 gives Black far too much activity. **♖c8 21.♕e2 exd5 22.♔b1!** 22.exd5 ♖e8 gives Black the initiative. **22...♗xc3** White is well placed after 22...dxe4 23.♘xe4, but Black should be able to handle this. **23.♗xc3 ♘c5** A surprising move. **24.♖xd5 ♕e8 25.f3!** A solid move that ensures White an advantage. **25...b6** Another move that at least did not occur to me from my sofa vantage point. Magnus' point was 25...♕xa4 26.♕d1 and 26...♘b3 is met by 27.♖xa5!. **26.♕e3! ♘xa4?!** Black must probably acquiesce to a slightly inferior endgame after 26...♕xa4 27.♕d4 ♕xd4 28.♗xd4. **27.♗d4!** The knight will never return to the game. **27...♖c4**



28.h4! I had expected 28.♖c1 and noted that 28...♕c6 could be met by 29.b3, but Black can put the queen on c8 instead. After 29.b3 ♖xc1 30.♕xc1 ♘c5 Black is saved because h3 is hanging. **28...♕c6 29.h5** Magnus was convinced that he was already winning. **29...gxh5** Otherwise 30.h6 follows, with a mating attack on the h-file. **30.♖xh5 ♖c8 31.♖h1!** Black's attack is not dangerous. **31...♖c2**

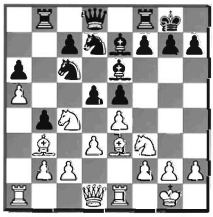
32.g6! Around here the Dane understood that this was going to go wrong for him. White threatens 33.♖h8+! ♔xh8 34.♕h6+ mating and 32...♕xg6 33.♖g5 is also the end of the road. **32...f6** After 32...♖xb2+ 33.♔a1! Black also has to worry about his hanging rook. **33.♖dh5 ♔f8 34.♕a3+** Magnus creates some audience excitement. Simpler was 34.♖h8+ ♔e7 35.♖xc8 ♕xc8 36.♕a3+ winning a piece. **34...♔e8 35.♖h8+ ♔d7 36.♖xc8 ♔xc8 37.♕e7!** White is winning here, too. **37...♕c7 38.♕e8+** Not the most obvious way of winning a piece. **38...♔b7 39.♕xa4 ♖c4 40.♕d1** Black resigned.

In the seventh round Magnus got an endgame lesson from Lithuanian GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2619). It was not fun, but hopefully it was educational. The next day Magnus bounced back with a fine win over US GM Nick de Firmian (2542). Magnus showed off his intuition with a deep positional pawn sacrifice. Much later the American found nothing else to do but sacrifice a knight for a few more pawns but

Magnus was up to the challenge and won a difficult endgame.

□ **Nick de Firmian**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Copenhagen 2004

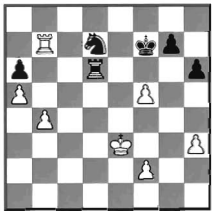
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.a4 Magnus was not intending to play the scary Marshall Gambit (8...d5) after the normal 8.c3, but de Firmian could hardly know that and chooses one of the so-called Anti-Marshall variations. **8...b4** 8...♗b7 is the most common. **9.d3 d6 10.a5!** An important move that isolates the b-pawn. **10...♗e6 11.♘bd2 ♖b8 12.♘c4** Kasparov played 12.♗c4 against Grischuk in a quick play tournament in Moscow in 2002. **12...♘d7 13.♗e3 d5!?** 13...♗f6 is safer.



14.exd5?! De Firmian played this after just a few minutes, clearly without noticing that this is a critical position. After 14.♗a4 Magnus had planned to sacrifice a pawn with 14...dxc4 15.♗xc6 cxd3 16.♕xd3 ♘c5, but there is hardly enough compensation here after taking on d8 and then on e5. **14...♗xd5** Now Black is fine. **15.♘cd2 ♗xb3 16.♘xb3 ♖b5!** A fine posting that pressures the a-pawn and also covers vital central squares. **17.♕e2 ♔h8** Clearly stating his intention to advance the f-pawn. **18.d4!?** **e4 19.♕c4 ♕a8** 19....♘cb8 or 19...♘db8 is strongly answered by 20.♘e5 ♘xe5 21.dxe5 ♖xe5 22.♗f4 and White gets c7 in return. **20.♘fd2 f5 21.♗f4**

21...♘f6! Magnus understands positional compensation, but here he did not have much choice. For example, 21...♕b7 is strongly met by 22.f3 when 22...exf3 23.d5 wins a piece for White. **22.♗xc7 ♘d5 23.♗b6 ♘f4 24.♘f1** White should perhaps settle for a draw by repetition with 24.♗c7. **24...♖f6 25.♘e3 ♖g6 26.♔f1 ♖h6 27.h3 ♕e8** Magnus mobilises his troops. **28.♗c7 ♗d6 29.♗xd6 ♖xd6 30.♖ad1 h6!** A fine move. White has nothing to do while Black can calmly improve his position. **31.♖d2 ♕d8** I preferred 31...♔h7. **32.d5 ♘e5 33.♕d4 ♕f6** Not 33...♘f3? 34.gxf3 ♕h4 35.♕xg7+! ♔xg7 36.♘xf5 and Black looks silly. **34.♘xf5!?** A desperate move in time pressure, but White is nearly out of sensible moves. For example, 34.♘c5 loses at once after 34...♘xg2! 35.♘xg2 ♘f3 36.♕xf6 ♘xd2+. **34...♕xf5 35.♕xe4 ♕xe4 36.♖xe4 ♘eg6 37.g3 ♖bxd5 38.gxf4 ♖xd2 39.♘xd2 ♖xd2 40.f5 ♘f8 41.♖xb4 ♖xc2 42.♖b8 ♔g8**

43.b4 ♖c6 44.♔e2 ♔f7 45.♔e3 ♘d7 46.♖b7 ♖d6

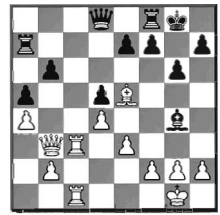


47.b5? After 47.f4 it is not easy to win for Black. At least, we could not find a concrete way in our analysis after the tournament. **47...♔e7! 48.♔e4 ♔d8 49.bxa6 ♖xa6** Not 49...♘c5+ 50.♔e5 ♘xb7 51.axb7 and it is White that wins. **50.♖b5 ♔c7 51.♔d5 ♖d6+ 52.♔e4 ♖d2 53.f3 ♔c6 54.♖b1 ♖a2 55.♖g1 ♖e2+ 56.♔d4 ♖e7** White has distracted attention from the a-pawn but now Black is very active and wins easily. **57.♖c1+ ♔d6 58.♖c8 ♘e5 59.a6 ♖a7 60.♖g8 ♘xf3+ 61.♔c4** Also after 61.♔e3 ♘g5 62.h4 ♘h7 followed by ♘f6 Black wins without problems. **61...♖xa6 62.♖xg7 ♔e5 63.♔d3 ♖a3+** White resigned.

In the last round he won easily against reigning Nordic champion and current Swedish number one Evgeny Agrest (2601). We later found out that Agrest had back trouble, but it is also typical that things look simple in the hands of a master.

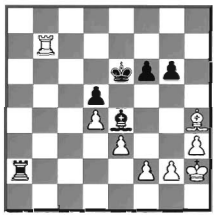
□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Evgeny Agrest**
Copenhagen 2004

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 5.a4 g6 6.♗f4 ♗g7 7.e3 0-0 8.♕b3 After, for example, 8.h3 Black can steer play into a type of Grünfeld with 8...c5. **8...♕a5** Considering his next move 8...b6 looks far more logical. **9.♕a3 ♕d8** Black's play seems very strange, but it has all happened before. **10.♗e2** In Stohl-Csom 10.a5 was played. **10...a5** Black takes the chance to gain control over b4, but new problems crop up. **11.0-0 ♘a6** 11...e6 would create the option of recapturing on d5 with the e-pawn, but risks creating a problem bishop on c8. **12.cxd5 ♘xd5 13.♘xd5 cxd5 14.♖fc1** Black is already in real difficulties. **14...♗g4** 14...♘b4 doesn't work because of 15.♗c7 ♕e8 16.♗xa5!. **15.♕b3 ♖a7** A sad move, but Black has no choice. **16.♖c3 b6 17.♗xa6** Black never had time to put this knight on b4. **17...♖xa6 18.♘e5 ♗xe5** Hoping that the opposite coloured bishops will give drawing chances. **19.♗xe5 ♖a7 20.♖ac1**



White has just put his pieces on natural squares but completely dominates the position. **20...♕d7** The b-pawn was doomed no matter what. **21.h3 ♗e2 22.♕xb6 ♖b7 23.♖c7 ♖xb6 24.♖xd7 ♗c4 25.♖xe7 ♖xb2 26.♖a7** And so White wins yet another pawn. **26...f6 27.♗d6 ♖f7 28.♖xa5 ♖fb7 29.♖a1 ♔f7 30.♖c5 ♔e6 31.♗g3 ♔f5 32.a5 ♖b1+ 33.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 34.♔h2 ♖b5**

The first difficult decision for Magnus in the game, but he quickly decided to keep the rooks on the board. **35.♖c7 ♖xa5 36.♖xh7 ♖a2 37.♖f7 ♔e6 38.♖g7 ♗d3 39.♗h4 ♗e4 40.♖b7**



40...g5?! Magnus believed the position was easily winning, but it is not that simple after 40...♖b6. **41.♗g3. f5?**. Agrest seems resigned. White still has work to do after 41...♖b6 followed by passive defence. **42.♖g7 f4 43.exf4 gxf4 44.♗xf4 ♖xf2 45.♗e5 ♖f7?!** This makes things very simple for Magnus. **46.♖xf7! ♔xf7 47.g4 ♗f3 48.♔g3 ♗d1 49.h4 ♔e6 50.h5 ♗a4 51.♔h4 ♗b5 52.♔g5 ♗e2 53.♔g6!** 1-0 Black must surrender his bishop for the h-pawn.

With 5½/9 and a rating performance of 2648 Magnus had exceeded the GM-norm again. While some prodigies have had their GM-norms discussed – did some of their opponents take a dive? – there was no doubt about Magnus. All three norms overachieved abroad, and one more for good measure at the Sigeman.

Magnus became a GM at record speed, but has no intention of stopping there. This was just the first step, and his first chance to be world champion was already just a month away.

9 World Championship

May-June 2004

'You have to think long-term.'
– Henrik Carlsen's explanation of why in the weeks leading up to the world championship Magnus was saddled with homework 3-4 hours a day.

The discussion about Magnus getting a spot in the FIDE World Championship in Libya began after his eye-opening successes in Wijk aan Zee and Moscow. Most of the 128 participants must qualify via regional championships. Some get a spot based on rating, but then one has to be around 2650 to be eligible. But the world chess federation also has some extra slots for players that have distinguished themselves in various ways. Magnus fit this description and had a chance at one of these spots, according to Norway's FIDE delegate Morten Sand.

The first time around Magnus was turned down. Sergey Karjakin, the world's youngest grandmaster at the time received a berth, but not Magnus, who still needed to get his title. When a number of the top players began to decline their invitations, the problem of allotting free places came up again. This knockout cup, which produces a world champion in three hectic weeks of mini-matches and overtime games played at increasing speed, has always been controversial. The fact that this tournament did not necessarily produce a clear and final champion was even more provocative.

After Kasparov's break with FIDE in 1993, there has been chaos around the world title. Kasparov started his own organisation with a world championship cycle and with FIDE there were two titleholders. Everyone agreed that Kasparov was the best, but the official world champion after Kasparov's defection was his old rival Karpov.

The inception of a gigantic World Championship knock-out cup in 1997 did not make things better, and many of the world elite were furious. FIDE wanted to modernise the old system where it took three years to produce a champion but the best players said the cup would ruin the quality of the games and produce random results. Privileges extended to certain players were also seen as unfair.

The frequent FIDE championships produced an assembly line of champions. In the inaugural event Viswanathan Anand from India won, but as reigning 'traditional' champion, Karpov was allowed to play a final against Anand. While 'Vishy' had fought his way through seven hard matches Karpov turned up rested and ready and won this so-called final 5-3. This champion's privilege was gone the next year and Karpov refused to participate.

When Alexander Khalifman, never reckoned a major title candidate, won the second edition it did little to establish con-

fidence in the FIDE KO as a way to generate a credible world champion. It helped a bit that Anand won in 2000 but in 2002 another surprise champion emerged, 18-year-old Ruslan Ponomariov from Ukraine.

When Vladimir Kramnik beat Kasparov in a new title match in 2000 things got even more confusing. Kasparov was still the highest rated and most respected player in the world, but Kramnik could now lay claim to his version of the title, while the official FIDE champion was Ponomariov.

No one was satisfied with this situation and after much negotiating a plan to unify the titles and create a new champion emerged. Kramnik would play a match against the winner of a qualifier in Dortmund, Germany, where seven of the world's best players, plus one from the host nation would meet while Kasparov would meet the winner of the FIDE championship in Libya.

Many found this scenario so infuriating that they boycotted Libya. Also complications about the freedom of Jews to play there created unease. Quite a few of the top players have Jewish roots, and preferred not to risk the trip.

The day after Magnus became a GM the news broke that he had been offered one of the free places. FIDE president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov holds the privilege to invite a few players and he allotted one of these spots to Magnus when veteran Viktor Kortchnoi declined his invitation.

Some people wondered if it was a disadvantage for Magnus to be invited so late, but such fears were unnecessary. The FIDE championship began on 19 June and the Sigeman tournament ended on May 9. This gave us six weeks to prepare. I put myself at Magnus' disposal and said at once that I would go along to Libya.

I was expecting a few hectic weeks but for me the only stress was writing this book. Suddenly Magnus was a GM and the original working title 'Magnus Carlsen – Grandmaster – age 15' had to be adjusted and the tempo stepped up.

Magnus did not have much time to think about the world championship and was saddled with homework 3-4 hours a day. 'You have to think long-term', said Henrik. His parents have obviously done an excellent job so far and there was no reason to doubt their judgement now, either – even if many would have preferred him to go into hard training for the world championship.

On Saturday 15 May Magnus managed to sneak away from schoolwork and take part in the Stjernespretten Grand Prix in Oslo, a quickplay tournament with no special claims to strength. After a loss to Kjetil A. Lie, our current leading grandmaster candidate, and a draw with a player rated 1806, Magnus had to settle for second place.

Magnus got to learn that life in a little pond was not necessarily easy. In the Norwegian team championship final in Trondheim less than a week later Magnus lost to Lie again.

It was irritating to lose twice to Lie in such a short time but Magnus drew easily with black against GMs Berge Østenstad and Einar Gausel and beat two lower rated players in the team final. His first grandmasterly appearance in Norway was just so-so.

Magnus sat on first board for NTG, ahead of me and my brother Espen, who with a rating of 2430 was ranked number ten in Norway. On the three top boards we

had the clearly strongest team but were not nearly as impressive on the three last. In the end we had to settle for fourth place while Asker, Magnus' former club, managed to recover from a terrible start and win the event.

Even if it was a national championship Magnus didn't take it too seriously. He was most interested in playing with other kids, including football with Lie and his clubmates from Porsgrunn.

After the team championship there was not a lot of time to devote to the world championship either. Just a few days before our departure to Libya, Magnus returned from a cabin in Larvik to give a simultaneous exhibition at Liertoppen shopping mall.

I also took part in this event. After our respective exhibitions we were to play four blitz games on a small stage. I won the first two rather easily and began to feel uncomfortable. Magnus seemed tired and nowhere near the form he had shown just before the tournament in Dubai and there was no point in beating him here. It was more important to build up his self-confidence before the world championship. Beforehand I felt a 2-2 result would have been fine. Magnus won in the third game but in the last round his flag fell a few seconds before mine, so I won 3-1, without any particular prestige attached.

Both Henrik and I were rather uncertain and pessimistic before the meeting with Armenian GM Levon Aronian (2645), who was to be Magnus' first round opponent. Aronian had impressed greatly in the blitz tournament in Reykjavik a few months earlier, winning ahead of Garry Kasparov. Magnus was not especially pleased with the pairing when it came in early June.

We still had a little time before we had to depart but it was difficult for Magnus to focus on the task in front of him. He was most interested in football training and the European football Championship that had just started. His emotional involvement in this sport was higher. Once I went along to pick him up after practice. The coach was giving instructions to his players while Magnus was squatting with his back turned, visibly annoyed. Magnus explained later that he had been told to play sweeper rather than his preferred place in midfield.

The documentary team had also followed Magnus on the pitch, and could testify that he played well, but had trouble with opponents that were a head or two taller. They also noticed that he hated to lose. Unfortunately Magnus' team had lost several games and the chess prodigy was not happy. Their keeper in particular had to take some lip, getting comments like: 'You should have saved that one!'

We did get a few days of chess and talked a bit about openings and what Aronian played, but the real preparations only began the day before the particular game. Maybe Magnus subconsciously wanted to push the pressure away and perhaps that was wise. We arrived at the five-star Almahary Hotel in Tripoli two days before the event started. There were no problems. We got the promised visa at the airport and didn't notice anything frightening at all, quite the reverse. The roads were excellent and the people friendly.

There were plenty of pictures of Muammar al Qaddafi, undisputed ruler of Libya, to be seen. At the opening ceremony the next day there was some juicy

propaganda for Libya and their leader, and perhaps our movements were monitored by security agents. But we saw little evidence of a police state. Alcohol was prohibited, but that didn't bother us.

With modern computer tools it didn't take us long to map Aronian as a player. His opening repertoire was relatively limited. We spent a lot of time on a special variation in the Nimzo-Indian that he had played often (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 c5 5.dxc5 ♕c7) but had a suspicion that he would probably castle on move four as Black here. This prediction turned out to be accurate and Magnus could fire off his preparation at top speed.

Aronian was clearly worried about being caught in prepared analysis but demonstrated his deep understanding of the position that arose. Magnus had to play accurately to hold the balance.

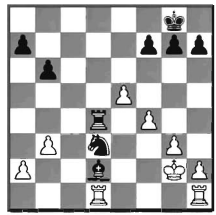
□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Levon Aronian**
Tripoli 2004

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 As expected. Aronian has understood that his old special variation has some holes. **5.e4!?** Aronian had played this himself in Reykjavik a few months earlier, so we were not expecting to get him into unknown territory, but this move is much easier to prepare than the traditional variations with 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♕xc3 b6 7.♗g5, where Black has many ways to continue. **5...d5** Aronian heads for the critical lines. **6.e5 ♘e4 7.♗d3 c5 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♘ge2 cxd4 10.♘xd4 ♘d7 11.f4 ♕h4+ 12.g3 ♕h3 13.♗d2** Magnus played the first 13 moves at a furious pace, which had an effect on Aronian. He certainly feared home preparation and it should be possible to find something exciting after the critical continuation 13...♘xg3 14.♗xh7+ ♔h8 15.♖g1 ♘h1!? which occurred in Ivanisevic – Speelman, Istanbul 2000. We only managed to have a rough look at some variations, without finding anything concrete. Aronian thought for a long time and found a sophisticated plan.

13...♘xd2 14.♕xd2 ♘c5 Magnus now took his first think of the game. We had only had a cursory look at this and concluded it was nothing special. **15.♗f1 ♕h6!** In the stem game Kramnik-Adams in a German TV-match in 1998 White won after 13.♗f1 (instead of 13.♗d2) ♕h5 14.♗g2, but we could find nothing good against 13...♕h6 14.♗g2 ♕a6!, which was played in some other games. After 15...♕h5 16.♗g2 ♘e4 17.♕e3 ♗h3 18.0-0 ♗xc3 19.bxc3 ♗xg2 20.♔xg2 White has a typical advantage. Black has a good knight and pressure on the c-pawn but White's dangerous advance on the kingside with f4-f5 is worth most. **16.♗g2 ♕a6! 17.♕e2** Aronian again sank into thought and found a move Magnus had not considered at all. **17...b6!? 18.♗xd5** White has nothing better. **18...♘d3+**

I had just returned from a trip to the swimming pool and was now trying to work out in my head what was happening after 19.♔d2. Magnus rejected this because of 19...♖d8, but Aronian had calculated longer and assessed the black position as good after 20.♕xd3 ♖xd5 21.♔e3 (21.♕xa6 is about the same and perhaps simpler) ♕xd3 22.♔xd3 ♗a6+ 23.♔e3 ♖xd4 24.♔xd4 ♖d8+. This is just not correct. After both 25.♔e4 or 25.♘d5 ♗b7 26.♔c4! White slithers out with a material advantage. Nor does 23...♖d7 give Black full compensation for a pawn. White's centralised pieces stifle the bishop pair. This is typical of Magnus. He much prefers to attack and so does not calculate variations in depth where he must defend. Here there is room for improvement. **19.♔f1 ♗h3+ 20.♗g2 ♗xg2+ 21.♔xg2 ♖fd8 22.♘cb5**

22...♖xd4! Magnus was impressed by the amount that Aronian had seen during the game. This temporary exchange sacrifice must have been planned as early as when he decided to play 17...b6. **23.♘xd4 ♖d8 24.♕e4** White cannot move the knight because of 24...♘xf4+ and the queen on e2 is no longer protected, and 24.♕e3 ♗c5 is nearly as bad. **24...♕c4! 25.b3** Magnus must sacrifice a piece to free himself. **25...♕xd4 26.♕xd4 ♖xd4 27.♖ad1 ♗d2**



Aronian believed this was necessary if he was to play for a win, but if anyone has the advantage here it is White. After the game Magnus found 28.h4! with the idea 29.♔f3 and 30.♖h2. If White can exchange a rook he can massage Black long and hard. Black has nothing to attack with his minor pieces. **28.♖hf1** Not 28.♖xd2? ♘xf4+!. **28...g5! 29.♔f3** Also 29.♖xd2 ♘xf4 30.gxf4 ♖xd2 31.♖f2 is a draw. **29...♘b2** Aronian wisely chooses to split the point. **30.♖b1 ♘d3 31.♖bd1 ♘b2** Draw

Magnus had hoped to start the match with black since he considered it easier to hold a draw with black than winning with white. So it was a bit of a disappointment to sit and defend in the first game, but in return

he held a draw with black in the next game rather easily.

We had prepared a variety of things. Aronian has a much more varied repertoire with white, so almost anything could happen. In what he actually chose I only managed to mention before the game that Karpov had crushed Andrey Sokolov in a candidates match many years ago by taking on c3 quickly and fianchettoing the dark squared bishop. Magnus followed theory without knowing it for a while and then found a novelty on move 12 that appears to solve Black's opening problems.

□ **Levon Aronian**
■ **Magnus Carlsen**
Tripoli 2004

1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.cxd5 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘xd5 6.♘f3 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 g6 8.d4 ♗g7 9.♗d3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘c6 11.♖e1 ♗g4 12.♗e4

12...e5! A new move that appears to equalise fully. A player as esteemed as ex-world champion Tigran Petrosian managed to lose in just 20 moves as Black from this position. This happened against English GM John Nunn in Tilburg in 1982: 12...♖c8 13.♗g5 ♖e8 14.♖b1 ♕d7 15.h3 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 b6 17.♗g4 f5 18.♗e2 h6 19.♗c1 ♔h7 20.d5 and Petrosian gave up since he loses the exchange. **13.dxe5** As in game one, Aronian went into the box early but this time his contemplation does not produce results. The critical test is 13.♗a3 ♖e8 14.d5 ♘a5 15.d6, but White will have to take care not to stand worse here. Aronian didn't feel like taking this chance. **13...♕xd1 14.♖xd1 ♗xe5!** Magnus plays the rest of the game with extreme precision. **15.♖b1 ♗xc3 16.♖xb7 ♖ad8! 17.♖f1 ♘d4! 18.♗g5** On 18.♖xa7 Magnus had planned 18...♖fe8!. **18...♖d7 19.♖xd7** Aronian assumed that Magnus saw he must take back on f3 before recapturing on d7 and offered a draw.

So far so good. Magnus had played more or less perfectly and appeared to be in top form. In the first of the two playoff games, which were played later in the evening with 25 minutes per player for the entire game, plus an additional ten seconds per completed move, Magnus was Black. A draw would be a good result.

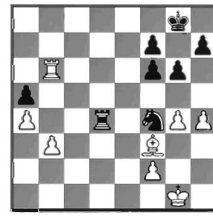
If our mood before departure was a bit pessimistic, it was now very optimistic. The last thing Magnus said to me before the first playoff game was that I should start preparing for Guseinov, his likely opponent in the second round if he eliminated Aronian. I told him to just concentrate on his game.

Again the opening was something we had cast a glance at, but Magnus played his first moves at top speed and with a self-confident expression. Aronian was clearly confused and fell back on the defensive. At the end things were less than solid, but Magnus luckily held a draw.

□ Levon Aronian
■ Magnus Carlsen
Tripoli 2004

1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♕b3 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♕b3 ♘xc3 8.♗c4! is not harmless but Magnus had planned instead to play 6...♗g7 which should be like the game. **6...♗g7 7.cxd5 0-0 8.♗e2 ♘bd7 9.♗f3 ♘b6 10.a4 a5 11.♘ge2 ♗f5! 12.♕d1?** Aronian sees that Magnus plans 12...♗d3 and then ♗c4 and wants to hinder this, but forgets that the d-pawn is hanging. The critical continuation was 12.0-0 ♗d3 13.d6!? and taking on b7. **12...♘bxd5 13.0-0 ♕d7 14.♘g3 ♗e6 15.♘ge4 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 b6** Black is already better. **17.♘g5 ♖ad8 18.♘xe6** Before Black can get in 18...♘c7 and take back with the knight on e6. **18...♕xe6 19.♖e1 ♕d6 20.♗g5** White is also sweating after 20.♗xd5 ♕xd5 21.♖xe7 ♗xd4. **20...♗f6 21.♕d2 ♗xg5 22.♕xg5**

22...♘b4?! Magnus sets off on a meaningless wander. With 22...e6 he can settle down to the task of mounting pressure on the White d-pawn. **23.♖ad1 ♘c2?** He must have thought he was winning the pawn on d4. **24.♖e4 ♕f6 25.♕xf6 exf6 26.g4** Suddenly it is White that has the advantage. **26...♖d6 27.♖d2 ♘b4 28.♖e7 ♖fd8 29.♖b7 ♖xd4 30.♖xd4 ♖xd4 31.♖xb6 ♘d3 32.b3 ♘f4 33.h4**



Magnus believed there was no danger but I was by no means sure. White is in the process of creating a decisive passed pawn on the queenside and it will usually take more than a knight and a rook to conjure up mating threats. **33...♔g7 34.♖b5 ♖d3 35.♗e4 ♖c3 36.♖xa5 ♖xb3 37.♖b5** I was worried about 37.♖a8 and pushing the a-pawn, but Black can put his rook behind the passed pawn. Magnus was probably right when he felt in control. **37...♖a3 38.a5?!** This blunders a pawn but does not create losing chances. **38...♘e2+ 39.♔g2 ♘c3 40.♖b4 ♘xe4 41.♖xe4 ♖xa5** Black cannot win this. **42.♖b4 h5 43.gxh5 ♖xh5 44.♔g3 ♖d5 45.f3 ♖d7 46.♖a4 ♔h6 47.♖b4 f5 48.♖c4 ♖e7** Draw.

Magnus now had his opponent wobbling psychologically, and this was what I tried to explain in the roughly half hour pause before the next game. Magnus was more determined than ever. With white he had a golden opportunity to secure a spot in the second round.

The choice of opening in the first game had not been a success so we had to

come up with something new. Magnus is just as happy with 1.e4 as 1.d4, but Aronian has played the rock-solid Berlin Variation of the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4). Not even Kasparov managed to puncture this defence in his match against Kramnik. So the choice fell on a rare line in the Trompovsky.

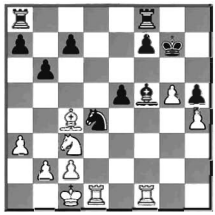
As expected, Aronian avoided the sharpest lines by playing 2...e6. Magnus eventually got an advantage but didn't exploit his chances. The game surged back and forth several times. Finally Magnus wound up in a rook endgame two pawns behind, but as they were f- and h-pawns, the game was a theoretical draw. Magnus had defended this exact type of position before and knew how to do it, but with only seconds on the clock it is easy to misplay. In the end Magnus lost on time, but after botching the draw.

□ **Magnus Carlsen**
■ **Levon Aronian**
Tripoli 2004

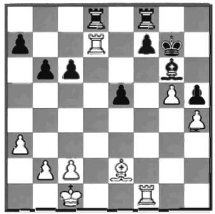
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 e6 3.e4 h6 4.♗xf6 ♕xf6 5.♘c3 ♗b4 6.♕d2 d6 7.♘ge2 ♘c6!? Now things get exciting. **8.a3 ♗xc3 9.♕xc3 0-0 10.f4** 10.f3 was a calmer alternative. **10...e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.f5**

At this point I was sitting in the press room discussing the position with GM Ivan Sokolov. We agreed that the situation looked a little bit suspicious for White here. But the players assessed things differently and both Aronian and Magnus thought White was better. **12...g6** An irritating move, according to Magnus, but it is also risky. **13.g4 h5 14.h3!** Magnus maintains his formation. **14...♖d8** The endgame after 14...♕h4 15.♕g3 ♕xg3 16.♘xg3 h4 17.♘e2 g5 favours White. A knight soon comes sailing into d5. **15.♕e3 b6**

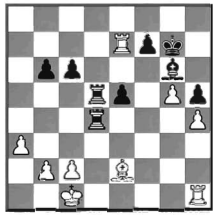
16.g5? Rubbish, according to Magnus. After the game he suggested the very interesting 16.♖h2!?, but also 16.fxg6 looks promising. After 16...♕xg6 17.gxh5 ♕xh5 18.♘g3 ♕h4 19.♗d3 White is clearly better and after 16...fxg6 17.gxh5 Black must try 17...♕h4+ 18.♘g3 ♕f4 if he is to avoid a mating storm on the kingside. **16...♕d6 17.♘c3 ♕d4** Magnus had planned 18.♕f3, but now discovered that this is answered by 18...♕d2 mate!. **18.♕xd4 ♘xd4 19.0-0-0 gxf5** Things do not look bright for Magnus now but he somehow manages to create counterchances. **20.♗c4 ♔g7 21.exf5 ♗xf5 22.♖hf1 ♖f8!** Protecting everything. **23.h4**



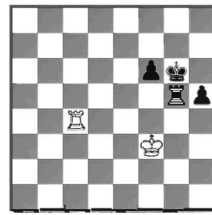
23...c6? Aronian must have been nervous. After 23...♗xc2 he has a big advantage. **24.♘e2! ♘xe2+ 25.♗xe2 ♗g6 26.♖d7** As if by magic the position is transformed. Magnus is better again! **26...♖ad8**



27.♖xa7? This move irritated Magnus greatly afterwards. After 27.♖fd1 White should at least have nothing to fear. **27...♖d4 28.♖h1 ♖fd8 29.♖e7 ♖8d5?**

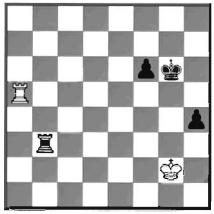


30.♗d3? There are plenty of opportunities to criticise moments in this game – the gravity of the occasion clearly unsettled both players. Now Magnus could again gain the advantage with 30.c4 but rejects it on the general grounds that it created too much of a breeze around his king, without calculating any variations. **30...♗xd3 31.cxd3 ♖f4 32.♔d2 e4 33.♔e3 ♖f3+ 34.♔e2** 34.♔xe4 is simpler. **34...♖dxd3 35.♖xe4 ♖b3! 36.a4 c5 37.♖e7 ♖f4** The situation is again critical for Magnus, but once more he fights back. **38.♖b7 ♖xb2+ 39.♔e3 ♖bb4 40.♖g1** Both players were now virtually out of time save for the extra ten seconds they got each time they moved. **40...♖be4+ 41.♔d3 ♖d4+ 42.♔e3 ♖de4+ 43.♔d3 ♖g4** Black does not want to allow 43...♖xh4 44.g6 **44.♖f1 ♖gf4 45.♖xf4 ♖xf4 46.♖xb6 ♖xa4 47.♖c6 ♖xh4 48.♖xc5 ♖g4 49.♔e3** Magnus wondered after the game if he could have played 49.♖f5 with the idea 49...♔g6 50.♖f6+, but quickly ascertained that the h-pawn is decisive after 49...h4. **49...♔g6 50.♔f3 ♖xg5 51.♖c6+ f6 52.♖c4**

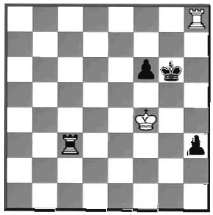


52...♖g1 Incredibly, Magnus has managed to struggle into an ending that he knows is a theoretical draw, but without time on the clock it is far from easy. **53.♖c8 ♖g4 54.♖g8+ ♔f5 55.♖h8 ♖g5 56.♖h6 ♔e5 57.♖h8 ♖f5+ 58.♔e3** It appears safer to go to the kingside but it does not make a difference. **58...♔d5 59.♖a8 ♔e6 60.♖a7**

♖b5 61.♔f4 ♖b4+ 62.♔f3 ♔f5 63.♖a5+ ♔g6 64.♖a8 h4 65.♖a5 ♖b3+



66.♔g4? I believe this is the decisive mistake. After 66.♔g2 it is still a known draw. **66...h3 67.♖g5+** This was the last game of the round to finish and a large crowd gathered around the board. There were many who inhaled an impressed gasp when Magnus instantly offered his rook like this but Aronian composed himself and plays fantastically from here. **67...♔f7** Not 67...fxg5 stalemate! **68.♖h5** Magnus thought that this drew at once but it turns out that White can never take the h-pawn without entering a lost pawn endgame. **68...♔e6 69.♖h8 ♖c3 70.♔f4 ♔f7 71.♔g4 ♔g6 72.♔f4** White was in zugzwang.



72...♖c2! 73.♔g3 After 73.♖xh3 ♖c4+ 74.♔g3 ♖c3+ 75.♔g2 ♖xh3 76.♔xh3 ♔f5! Magnus is, unfortunately, lost. **73...h2 74.♔f3 ♔f5 75.♖h5+ ♔e6 76.♖h8 ♔e5 77.♖e8+ ♔d4!** An instructive winning manoeuvre. **78.♖d8+ ♔c3 79.♖h8 ♖d2 80.♔g3 ♔d3 81.♔f3** The h-pawn is still taboo. **81...♔c2 82.♔g3 ♔d1** Here White's time ran out but Black wins nevertheless by marching his king to g1. 0-1

And so the world championship adventure was over. It had been fun while it lasted. Magnus had fought well and had been up to the challenge. He will certainly get another chance and having this kind of experience so young will be a big advantage then.

We had to decide in advance when we should book a return flight and took a chance on 24 June. Then we would be here for the second round if Magnus had beaten Aronian. If he had gone even further we would just buy new tickets. Magnus would then have earned enough prize money that the expense wouldn't hurt. Now he had to settle for about NOK 35,000 (slightly over 4,000 Euro) but had to deduct travel costs. The remaining days of the trip we could enjoy as tourists, in the hotel's swimming pool for a start. Magnus managed to avoid a museum visit but the Roman ruins at Leptis Magna were required viewing.

The only Roman emperor to come from Africa wanted to move the capital of the mighty empire to Libya but an earthquake a few hundred years AD had ruined this and several other old cities on the African Mediterranean coast. It was a formidable historical remnant but it was less appealing to Magnus: 'Forty degrees and wandering around some old ruins – can it get worse than this?!'

Glossary

Blitz – Very fast games, with at most five minutes per person per game, possibly with additional seconds per player per completed move. Also called lightning chess.

Elo rating – A system invented by mathematician Arpad Elo to measure playing strength. International master level is around 2400, grandmaster level is up from 2500. The world's very best players are around 2800.

Exchange – The difference between a rook and a minor piece (knight or bishop). For example, gaining a rook for a bishop or knight is called 'winning the exchange'.

Fianchetto – The early development of a bishop on a long diagonal, by first moving one's b- or g-pawn.

FIDE – The World Chess Federation (Fédération Internationale des Échecs): www.fide.com.

GM – (International) Grandmaster. The highest lifetime title awarded by FIDE.

ICC – Internet Chess Club, the world's largest online chess club.

IM – International master. FIDE's second highest life title.

Mate – The most classical end of a chess game. One player checks his opponent's king and the latter has no way to escape from this attack.

Notation – A method of recording the course of a game. Algebraic notation, where the squares are assigned values according to an 8x8 grid of letters (a-h) and numbers (1-8) is the international standard.

NTG – The Norwegian College for Top Athletes. Despite not being recognized as a sport in Norway, there is a chess course here taught by Simen Agdestein.

Opening theory – Existing knowledge of how to play the first phase of the game, largely based on previously published master games.

Opposite-coloured bishops – When each player has one bishop remaining, and they control different coloured squares. A bishop controlling light squares versus a bishop controlling dark squares.

Østlandsserien – Norway's league of teams from the southeastern part of the country, traditionally the strongest region as it includes Oslo. The best regional teams meet in an annual national title final.

Piece – The bishop and knight are known as minor pieces, the rook and queen the major pieces.

Positional (Strategic) play – The slower aspects of positions, usually taking into account long-term manoeuvring, weak squares and characteristics of the pawn structure.

Quick play – A game played at a faster rate than tournament chess but slower than blitz chess. A quick play (or rapid) game is roughly 20-30 minutes per player for all moves, with digital chess clocks an increment of a few seconds per completed move per player may be added.

Stalemate – A situation where a game is declared drawn because the person to move has no legal move.

Tactical play – Play based on forced sequences, often involving attacks or combinations/series of forced moves.

Time control/ time limit – The assigned rate of play in an event. This now varies greatly but in serious events tends to exceed an average of two minutes per move per player and has a deadline at move 40 where one must not exceed the limit on punishment of forfeit.

Variation – A series of moves or the name of a popular method of play in an opening, for example the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Defence.

WGM – Women's grandmaster. The requirements for FIDE's women's titles are somewhat lower than the men's titles.

Zugzwang – A German chess term that has become an international standard. A rough translation is 'movebound'. A situation, almost always in endgames, where the obligation to move means a worsening of one's own position. So, if one could 'pass', the position would not deteriorate.

Main results

1999

July, Gausdal
Norwegian championship, Miniputt (under-11): 13th, 6 out of 11 points

2000

April, Gausdal
Open Norwegian championship: 29th, 3½ out of 9
July, Asker
Norwegian championship, Miniputt (under-11): 1st, 10 out of 11
October-November, Bad Wiessee, Germany
International Bavarian championship: 228th (from 495), 4½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2113)
November, Porsgrunn
Norwegian junior championship under-10: 1st, 6 out of 7

2001

January, Gausdal
Troll Masters: 41st (from 48): 3 out of 9
February, Laugar, Iceland
Nordic championship (Miniputt): 1st, 5½ out of 6
April, Oslo
Open Norwegian championship: 12th, 5½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2325)
April, Gausdal
Gausdal Classics (IM-group): 8th (from 10), 2½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2090)
July, Kristiansund
Norwegian junior championship: 6th, 5½ out of 9
September, Panormo, Crete
European Club Cup: Board 6 for Asker SK, 4½ out of 7 (Rating performance 2291)
October-November, Bad Wiessee, Germany
International Bavarian championship: 114th (out of 512), 5 out of 9 (Rating performance 2334)
November, Porsgrunn
Norwegian junior championship (Miniputt): 1st, 6 out of 7

2002

January, Gausdal
Troll Masters: 24th, 4½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2180)
January, Fredrikstad
Open Norwegian rapid championship: 3rd, 6½ out of 10
January-February, Marianske Lazne, Czech Republic
International Open: 10th (from 66), 6 out of 9
February, Tjele, Denmark
Nordic championship (11-12 years): 1st, 5 out of 6
March, Lysaker
Open Norwegian championship: 2nd, 5½ out of 7 (Rating performance 2239)
April, Gausdal
Gausdal Classics (GM-group): 8th (from 10), 2½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2256)
May, Oslo:
National Team championship: 1st with Asker SK (board 5), 3½ out of 5 (Rating performance 2388)
July, Røros
Norwegian championship (Elite class): 13-15th (from 22), 3 out of 8
July, Bergen:
Bergen Chess International: 17th (from 40), 5 out of 9 (Rating performance 2288)
August, Kiel, Germany
15. Kieler Open: 15th (from 130), 6 out of 9

September-October, Peniscola, Spain
European youth championship (under-12): 6th (from 59), 6 out of 9 (Rating performance about 2300)
November, Heraklio, Crete
World youth championship (under 12): 2nd (from 117), 9 out of 11

2003

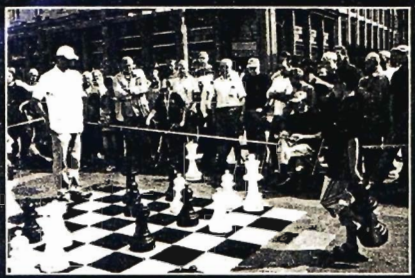
January, Vikersund
Open Norwegian rapid championship: 6th (from 110), 6½ out of 10 (beats Simen Agdestein)
January, Gausdal
Troll Masters: 6th (from 60), 7 out of 10 (first IM-result)
February, St. Vincent, Italy
Open Valle d'Aosta: 73rd (from 186), 5 out of 9 (Rating performance 2357)
April, Gausdal
Gausdal Classics: 12th (from 12), 4 out of 11 (Rating performance 2345)
April, Oslo
Open Norwegian championship: 1st (from 74), 7 out of 7
June, Stockholm, Sweden
Salongernas IM-tournament: 2nd (shared), 6 out of 9 (Rating performance 2470)(second IM-result)
July, Fredrikstad
Norwegian championship (Elite class): 7th (from 20), 5½ out of 9
July, Copenhagen, Denmark
Politiken Cup: 8 out of 11 (Rating performance 2503) (third IM-result)
August, Schwarzach, Austria
Schwarzacher Open: 4th (from 76), 6½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2537)
September, Budva, Montenegro
European youth championship: 3rd (from 70), 6½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2470)
September-October, Rethymnon, Crete
European Club Cup: Board 1 for Asker SK, 3½ out of 7 (Rating performance 2501)
October, Halkidiki, Greece
World youth championship: 9th, 7½ out of 11 (Rating performance 2407)
November, Taormina, Sicily
Claude Pécaut Memorial: 3rd (from 10), 5½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2481)
December, Budapest, Hungary
First Saturday (GM-tournament): 3rd (from 14), 8 out of 13 (Rating performance 2512)

2004

January, Wijk aan Zee, Holland
Corus tournament, C-Group: 1st, 10½ out of 13 (Rating performance 2702) (first GM-result)
February, Moscow, Russia
Aeroflot Open: 40th (from 203), 5½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2660) (second GM-result)
March, Reykjavik, Iceland
Reykjavik Open: 4½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2433)
Reykjavik Blitz: 15th (from 16), beats ex-world champion Anatoly Karpov
Reykjavik Rapid: loses to Garry Kasparov ½-1½
April, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Dubai Open: 2nd, 6½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2674) (third GM-result)
April-May, Malmö/Copenhagen
Sigeman tournament: 3rd (from 10), 5½ out of 9 (Rating performance 2648)
June, Tripoli, Libya
FIDE world championship: is eliminated in Round 1 by Levon Aronian, 1½ - 2½

At the age of thirteen years, four months and twenty-six days, Magnus Carlsen became the youngest chess grandmaster in the world. The scene of this stunning record: Dubai. The date: April 26, 2004. Predictably, the international press raved about the Norwegian prodigy. The Washington Post even dubbed him 'the Mozart of chess'.

*



A game between Magnus Carlsen and Simen Agdestein

Magnus Mania had reached a first peak a few weeks earlier, when in Reykjavik he beat former world champion Anatoly Karpov and next held none other than Garry Kasparov to a draw. Having lost a further game with the world's number one, thirteen-year-old Magnus commented without a trace of irony, 'I played like a child'.

*

Wonderboy is the fairy-tale-like story of Magnus Carlsen's rise and the story-teller could not have been better qualified. For the past four years Simen Agdestein has trained Magnus, repeatedly pinching himself in amazement at his pupil's lightning progress.

*

Agdestein is a most remarkable double talent. Not only did he win the Norwegian national chess championship six times, but he also used to be a highly gifted football player. He played for Lyn FC in Oslo and represented the Norwegian national soccer team on eight occasions. These days Agdestein teaches chess at the NTG, the Norwegian College for Top Athletes.

*

While you follow Magnus on his fabulous journey, Agdestein is your guide, telling about the Carlsen family life and explaining the secrets of Magnus' play in clear and instructive comments. Any chess player could hardly pick up a more inspiring book. *Wonderboy* will fascinate parents and help gifted children to realize their full potential.

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